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COMMONWEAL

Marie Ponsot on
TRACY KIDDER: AMONG SCHOOLCHILDREN

Robert P. Imbelli on
GEORGE STEINER: REAL PRESENCES

Raymond A. Schroth on
JOHN GREGORY DUNNE: HARP

Dale Bishop on
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Margaret R. Miles on
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Michael O. Garvey on
RANDALL BALMER: MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY

Patricia Gries on
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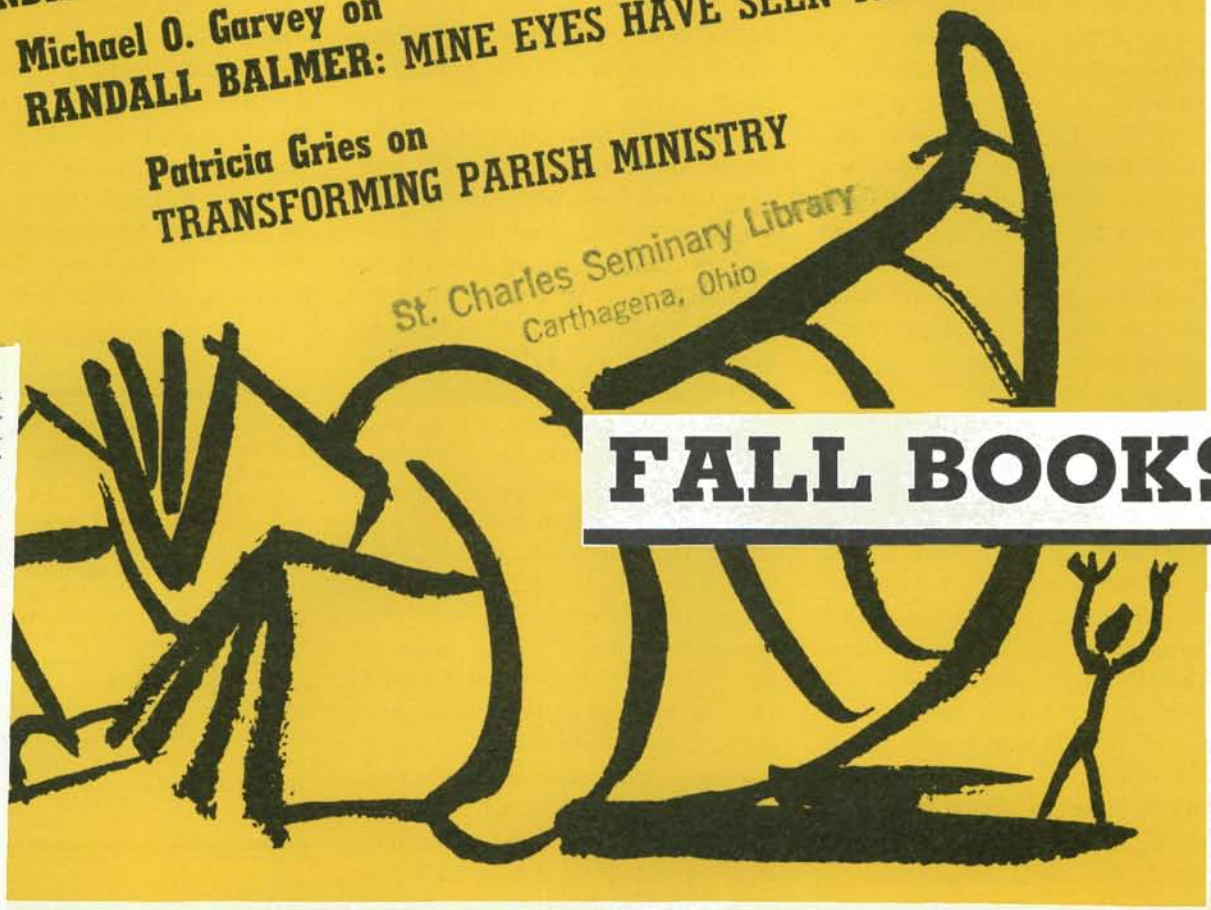

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CORRESPONDENCE

The overly critical

New York, N.Y.

To the Editors: Having read the comments in the September 22 issue on Paul Dinter's article ["Standing in the Way of Worship," June 16], I find it necessary to protest. I entered the church by way of a pre-Vatican II Benedictine convent school, so I do know how beautiful the liturgy ought to be, and I do admit that I have participated in not very many Masses elsewhere that measured up, but I don't believe I know any priests like those Dinter castigates....

I act as lector at the church my family and I have belonged to for some twenty years. I do so with gusto because I want to serve God and my neighbor and because I am by nature a ham. I trust the good Lord to separate the wheat from the chaff, to let my good will and his good news triumph over my narcissism. I find it only right to view the priests who serve my parish in the same way. Whatever their shortcomings—speaking too fast, singing off key, giving sermons too long or perfunctory—none has ever been other than humble when he allowed himself to be the means by which the bread and wine become Christ—the miracle at the center of the liturgy and my faith.

Perhaps parishes in San Diego are as grimly inadequate as Gertrud Mueller Nelson says, though I hope and pray there are a few more bastions of hope than she has found. Since I live in New York, I bear witness that things are not so bad here as Thomas Cahill opines. From what I've said about our own parish, it is obvious that services there are less than perfect—those who lead the singing cannot always count and both the organ and organists, for the most part, leave something to be desired. But if—God forbid—my daughters leave the church, it won't be because of the parish. Whatever its faults, both the priests and the people they serve worship seriously, genuinely, and sufficiently as a community to be "home" to my children.

I could ask for more, but criticism so sharp as that of your commentators makes me well aware of how much I get.

MARIAN BURKHART

Holocaust memories

Perth Amboy, N.J.

To the Editors: I take vigorous exception to John Pawlikowski's analysis of the Auschwitz convent situation ["A Sign of Contradiction," September 22]. Pawlikowski's arguments depend upon the assumption that Jews alone are arbiters of the Holocaust, how it is defined, and how it is commemorated. Thus, he argues that Cardinals Glemp and Macharski "failed to consult with the international Jewish community before the convent was established." Glemp failed to promote "the basic validity of the Jewish claim."

It is precisely that claim and Pawlikowski's fundamental assumption that lie at the heart of the present controversy. Polish Gentile losses in the Holocaust were great, too. Poland lost over six million people: three million Jews, three million Christians. Almost five of those six million perished in assorted concentration camps, jails, and ghettos. Father Maximilian Kolbe had already made the ultimate sacrifice at Auschwitz *before* the Final Solution, with its Jewish transports to that camp, got into full swing.

Pawlikowski cites Jewish fears about "Christianizing" the Holocaust. Such an effort is no sinister conspiracy but rather an effort to strike a more historically accurate balance. When almost every Polish home was touched by the Draconian occupation of the Nazis, when the ranks of the Polish clergy were decimated, when others—like Bishop Michal Kozal at Dachau—also gave their lives, when Poles, despite the fact that *only* in their country was assistance to Jews a capital crime, sought to help within their limited means, one cannot simply treat these aspects as but a footnote to the Holocaust.

A Carmelite convent has stood at Dachau since 1965. No one sees it as fraught with "potential to destroy a quarter-century of Catholic-Jewish relations." If those relations are so fragile that exposing a constricted ideological reading of the Holocaust to the full historical record can destroy them, then one must ask just how secure their foundations are.

With our Jewish brothers and sisters, Poles can say "Zakhor," "remember!" But they will never accept only a selective memory.

DR. JOHN M. GRONDELSKI

Pain not shame

Westfield, N.J.

To the Editors: I was pained to read John Pawlikowski's article calling the Auschwitz convent a "pain to Jews, a shame to Catholics" ["A Sign of Contradiction," September 22].

As a former Catholic concentration camp inmate, I take offense at those who want to reduce the Holocaust to a purely Jewish affair. At least 1.5 million Christians were murdered in Auschwitz. Do they, and does their faith, have no role in saying how they should be remembered?

Professor Pawlikowski says that Jews must understand the special significance Auschwitz holds for Poles. That meaning is not some quirk of Polish provincialism,

(Continued on page 606)

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The politics of evasion

The great political and moral debate that was promised (and in some quarters dreaded) following the Supreme Court's decision in *Webster* this past July eludes the nation. In a previous editorial (August 11), we expressed the hope that the debate would give consideration to developing human life, would work toward implementing mechanisms and policies encouraging women to weigh the interests of the fetus and give birth, and would have the effect of changing the minds and hearts of men and women on the abortion question in order to reduce the unconscionable number of abortions we see each year in the U.S. Given the chance openly to debate more restrictive abortion laws, perhaps the nation would rather evade it. But perhaps, after decades of don't-give-an-inch sloganeering on all sides, it is impossible for the ordinary citizen to detect exactly where the moral issue could be usefully raised and debated, or, given the current range of public opinion, how a political compromise might be framed.

For the moment the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) and other abortion rights advocates have managed, at least in Florida and the U.S. House of Representatives, to turn the focus on our national antipathy toward politicians. "Who decides?" is their slogan: "women or politicians?" The visceral antipathy among Americans to government interference in their lives lies deep in the national history and the national psyche. This neurosis was well nourished during the anti-abortion Reagan administration, and now has been given real vitality in the image that abortion rights advocates hold up of a woman forced to bear a child through the political power of the likes of Jesse Helms or his equally antediluvian counterparts in state legislatures. The liberal-left prochoicers' recourse to a libertarian strategy is but one political irony leading us astray.

Meanwhile, the legislative efforts of the National Right to Life Committee to introduce more restrictive laws at the state level seem to have been eclipsed by Operation Rescue. Its stalwarts continue to block abortion clinics in the face of court orders, jail sentences, and crushing fines. There is another irony here. The tactics, the statements, and underlying philosophy of Operation Rescue and its leader, Randall Terry, evoke the deepest fears of feminists, prochoicers, and many ordinary citizens that anti-abortionists not only want an end to abortions but want to roll back the equal opportunities and rights that women have achieved over the last twenty-five years. The mainstream prolife movement has kept a careful distance from Operation Rescue and its disruptive tactics. So there is a special irony in the possibility that by drawing on the methods carefully honed by liberals and leftists in the Civil Rights and anti-Vietnam movements, Operation Rescue will completely derail any hope for reaching legislative compromises on the abortion issue.

But most disheartening: our politicians have yet to demonstrate the moral and political seriousness that the abortion issue requires. Gov. Bob Martinez, a prolifer

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and a Republican, called a special session of the Democratic-dominated Florida state legislature to consider various restrictive measures; all were quickly defeated. In a state that has tended toward strict abortion laws, the governor failed to develop a real strategy for getting the bills through committee, galvanized prochoice advocates, and got a predictable political drubbing for his inept political organizing. His opponents point out that in a regular session of the legislature, where abortion regulation would have been one among a number of issues, some of the measures would have passed. So much for political seriousness.

What of moral seriousness? Florida legislator Robert J. Shelley explains his shift from the prolife to the prochoice camp: "I've always been personally in favor of right to life and still am. But you've got to balance between your constituents and what your heart tells you. I'd be a fool not to listen to my constituents." What Representative Shelley's head, rather than heart, shows is that "personally opposed, but..." is a straw in the wind in a rising political storm. In this election year, New York mayoral candidate Rudolph Giuliani (Rep.), and Illinois gubernatorial candidate Neil Hartigan (Dem.) have blown about in the same wind.

And so, it would appear, has Gov. Mario Cuomo of New York. After a brief exchange with a *New York Times* reporter (September 11, 1989) in which he spoke of his discomfort as a male and a member of the male establishment over making judgments about abortion, prochoice supporters welcomed him definitively to their ranks. In a letter to *Catholic New York*, the archdiocesan paper, he then denied any change in the position he set forth in his 1984 Notre Dame speech. Subsequently he has joined eight other governors in an amicus brief (*Turnock* v. *Ragsdale*—an Illinois case contesting hospital-level standards for abortion clinics) asking the Supreme Court not to allow states to restrict the right to abortions before viability.

Before *Webster*, it could be argued, as the governor has, that abortion on demand was "the law of the land" and that as a public official he had to uphold the law embodied in *Roe*. Though *Webster* has not withdrawn the right established in *Roe*, it did finally acknowledge what was also stated in *Roe*—the state may have an interest in the protection of a viable fetus in the third trimester. The fetus now has an acknowledged standing in the legal arena; abortion on demand need no longer be the only "law of the land." In the death penalty debate, Governor Cuomo has used his powers of discernment and eloquence in an attempt to move the citizenry toward his own views opposing capital punishment, views based on moral as well as political principles. At this juncture of the national debate, we are sorry that the governor seems to stand back from using those considerable talents to engage the body politic in considering the value of developing human life.

For the critical issue is not simply "Who decides?" as NARAL has it. Nor is it a women's conscience, as the governor would have it, that can be our legal or moral standard. Nor is it an issue from which men can or ought to withhold judgment—or deny responsibility. (It was a male Supreme Court, after all, that decided *Roe*; it is men who have always favored the most liberal abortion laws; and in some important respects, it is men who benefit as much as or more than women from the present laws and the present moral climate.) Nor is it an imposition of religious views to try to incorporate the interests of a developing human in the law. Some of the current proposed restrictions do so; good moral and political arguments can be made on their behalf.

Finally, sound and persuasive moral argument is an important part of the political debate. As we have previously argued (August 11), in the end it is not legislation that will stem the tide of abortions, but changing the hearts and minds of women and men about the value of nascent human life—for its own sake, for the sake of those who protect it and the social bonds that tie us all together. Political and moral debate can contribute to that conversion of mind and heart. Our political leaders, rather than engaging in that debate, seem to be evading it.

EAST GERMANS GO WEST

During September the eyes of the world were fixed on a tear in the Iron Curtain. Through it a human drama unfolded, full of irony: while East Germany prepared to celebrate its fortieth anniversary, some 40,000 of its citizens prepared to get out.

Half of September's émigrés were too young to remember the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 or Erich Honecker's role in erecting it; few could recall the toll of Germans shot climbing over it. Yet these young people—fleeing the most prosperous country in the Eastern bloc, abandoning homes, cars, and vacation houses...spouses, parents, and friends—described their futures as hopelessly constricted. They left, not by scaling the wall, but by car, on foot, by train, still toting picnic baskets and suitcases packed for the holidays.

Hungary's bold gesture last May—of taking down the barbed wire fences along its Austrian border—eased but did not cause the East German exodus. After all, the Hungarians remain at home, materially less comfortable than the East Germans, but enthusiastic about the potential of political (and constitutional) reform and economic independence opening to them under *glasnost*. The Czechs, beginning to feel the winds of change, let the East Germans pass through their territory without rushing to join them.

The East German refugees saw themselves as victims of their leaders' refusal to embrace *perestroika*; they had little hope for freedom of expression, free elections, or more democratic policymaking. As they packed the embassies of Eastern Europe, they renounced Honecker's paralysis and headed for West Germany, which shares their language, history, and kin, the country that has subsidized the East German economy for forty years.

Compared with the life-and-death choices faced by previous generations of East Germans, by the Indochinese and Haitian boat people, and by Latin Americans dependent on "coyotes" to guide them across the deserts of Mexico, the East Germans risked little. They knew they would be greeted with open arms,

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West German citizenship, jobs, cash, and a democratic future. Yet, with this summer's violent crackdown on the student-reformers in China, they could not be certain of their own government's reaction: it might have been merely a tightening of border patrols. It could have been truncheons, tear gas, or gunfire. So far, it's the former.

Now a second spectacle is beginning to unfold. After trying to crush the initial protests in Leipzig and Dresden, the East German Politburo has reversed itself. It has embarked on a critical self-examination and has publicly called for a discussion of "the basic questions of our society." This has had the effect of letting the lid rise on the growing demands for reform of those who have stayed behind. With a hundred thousand protestors in Leipzig on October 16 peacefully chanting, "We are the people" and "Gorby! Gorby!" the Politburo ousted Honecker. It may soon be forced to initiate the reforms it has stubbornly resisted until now.

The new government led by Egon Krenz may yet be tempted to turn to repressive measures, à la China. To do so would risk provoking another, more humiliating exodus, fueling its internal opposition groups, and incurring a cut-off of revenue from West Germany.

It may well be that the refugees of summer, who left in despair of reform, have set it in motion.

TRIPLE PLAY

The Middle East, third-world debt, AIDS—the U.S. Catholic bishops have written and are circulating statements on these critical issues. In our brief assessments below, we find the first two admirable, the third problematic. But first, a comment on the recurring complaint that publishing such statements is (take your pick) inappropriate, useless, counterproductive, and that the bishops would do better to tend their own weedy ecclesiastical gardens.

"Bishops have no business commenting on economic or political questions that are not properly 'religious.'" That view depends on a conception of religion so bodiless as to be un-Catholic. "The bishops are playing in the right ballpark but out of their league; it's beyond the competence of these particular churchmen and their staffs to balance all the factors involved in, say, nuclear deterrence." This criticism most often comes from people who dissent from the findings of a particular episcopal document; it has to be considered on its merits, document by document.

Finally, there's the waste-paper critique: "the statements, regardless of their merits, don't make any pastoral or political difference in the real world and so should be discontinued." That's an empirical judgment; it would be difficult indeed to gather data sufficiently subtle and broad-based to prove or disprove it. The statements on nuclear arms and economic justice have had impact (certainly on us, demonstrably on leaders and troops of other denominations). The process of preparing and debating episcopal affirmations on policy questions has certainly and usefully educated one constituency within the church: the *episkopoi* themselves.

It does matter, of course, how committed individual bishops are to what is called "implementation," but at least as much depends on the response of individual pastors, editors, educators, pew-persons—emphatically including those who disagree with a particular stand. By taking the bishops (and themselves) seriously enough to publish a sort of counterpastoral, William Simon, Michael Novak, & Co. multiplied the attention given to *Economic Justice for All*; the media are by nature conflict-oriented, the more so when the conflict is within the Catholic church.

There's also the matter of process. The statement on third-world debt is already "official" policy, having been prepared and published by the fifty-member administrative board of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. In contrast, the other two statements exist in draft form, and are to be debated, amended, and voted up or down at the bishops' general meeting next week (Nov. 6-9). The debt statement, we're given to understand, did not receive this full treatment because there wasn't enough room on the agenda for discussion of three major statements in one meeting. And perhaps there was some thought to influencing the current and continuing discussion within the administration, and between the banks and debtor countries. Nonetheless, we think the decision was unfortunate. The draft-debate-amendment-vote procedure, especially if preceded by public hearings, is much more likely to draw attention than a routine distribution cum press release; more substantively, it far better reflects the spirit of collegiality, which has turned all too evanescent since it floated about the *aula* of St. Peter's during Vatican II.

THE MIDDLE EAST The draft statement touches on the religious and political history of the region, sources and causes of the long-running tragedy of Lebanon, the competing needs and claims of the Israelis and the Palestinians, the roles being played by the Arab states in general, Syria and Egypt in particular, the Soviet Union, the U.S. government, the Vatican, the American and other Catholic hierarchies, the United Nations. It refers to the origins of Lebanese nationhood, to the Crusades, the Holocaust, Israel's wars of survival and its invasion of Lebanon, the *intifada*, the relevant Security Council resolutions, the status of Jerusalem, above all to Israel's need for secure borders and the Palestinians' need for territory with sovereignty.

All this in 9,000 words filling forty-one typewritten, double-spaced pages. Yet the statement is readable and, taken as a whole, persuasive. It is perhaps less than candid in assessing the specific contribution of Lebanese Christians to their country's agony, less than forthright in calling for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian impasse without quite daring to use the term. It does not attempt or pretend to offer a detailed plan for Middle East peace. Its recommendations will work only if received in the spirit they are offered.

All this having been said, the draft statement is a notable achievement. It says little if anything that has not been said before but it assembles its parts into a coherent and comprehensible whole. And some of its parts—sentences, paragraphs, some whole

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passages—are jewels of compression and clarity. Because it calls for Palestinian sovereignty, the statement was greeted by the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee as a "historic development"; for the same reason, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith said it was "fundamentally flawed." Less predictably, the American Jewish Congress praised the bishops for their "genuine sensitivity to Israel's real security concerns." All three responses confirm our judgment that the drafting committee and their assistants have achieved the kind of tone and balance indispensable for useful discussion of the Middle East. We hope the draft will pass substantially as drawn, and that the final document will then be put to wide use.

INTERNATIONAL DEBT In the last decade, the coal-miner's refrain, "another day older and deeper in debt," has become a chorus for much of the third world. Their indebtedness to the developed world has increased from $400 billion to $1.3 trillion in that time; seventeen nations are unable to meet their debt agreements and the list is growing; living standards have fallen more than 25 percent in large parts of Africa and 15 percent in Latin America; and there has been a massive transfer of capital from the underdeveloped to the industrial world: $43 billion in 1988 alone. People are literally dying in the streets as a consequence of the debt. The U.S. bishops say that is intolerable ("Relieving Third-World Debt: A Call for Coresponsibility, Justice, and Solidarity," Administrative Board, NCCB).

What business is that of ours? According to the board, more than a little: at least 30 percent of third-world debt is owed to U.S. commercial banks and the U.S. government. Not only is third-world capital being siphoned off to service those debts, but capital that might otherwise be available for development in third-world countries is now being usurped by the U.S. to service our own gargantuan debt and deficits.

The statement is a compelling reflection on the human costs of third-world debt. The administrative board has consulted widely and addresses all the major players: governments of both creditor and debtor nations, commercial lending institutions, multilateral agencies (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund), and the elites in both lending and debtor nations. The document—as with the 1983 pastoral letter on nuclear war—brings sorely needed attention to the ethical dimension of the question. Unfortunately, its brevity precludes other than very general suggestions for practical solutions. Since the document is correct in pointing to both the need and responsibility to develop such solutions, perhaps the full body of bishops should tackle that larger project. By holding public hearings and stimulating broad discussion, the cry of the poor might finally be heard, understood, and responded to by the major (and minor) players.

AIDS "Called to Compassion: A Response to the HIV/AIDS Crisis," is a clear and direct statement on AIDS. The bishops offer sound and sensitive positions on AIDS testing and the need for drug treatment programs and outreach services to AIDS sufferers, their families and caregivers; they condemn violence against gays and urge those infected to inform sexual partners.

This draft seems certain to satisfy Vatican objections to the 1987 document, "The Many Faces of AIDS: A Gospel Response," adopted by the NCCB administrative board (see "Getting the Point," *Commonweal*, January 15, 1988). The current draft says that traditional Catholic teaching is the only morally correct and certain way to stop the spread of AIDS: abstain from all sexual intercourse outside of marriage; abstain from all intravenous (IV) drug use.

No doubt this message needs to be proclaimed. No doubt these proposals will be effective to the extent that they are followed.

The problem? The bishops reject, without benefit of data or documentation, clean-needle-exchange programs for addicts and dismiss as "the safe-sex approach" the promotion of condoms in AIDS education campaigns. Yet when abstinence is not practiced, these are the most effective efforts now known to prevent the spread of this fatal disease.

As "authentic teachers" of morality, what would the bishops say to a married couple, one of whom has AIDS? What advice would they give to those who cannot give up IV drugs or will not abstain from sex outside of marriage? The bishops have decided publicly to proclaim the moral law as they see it, while omitting any reference to the pastoral wisdom now applied by ministers of the Catholic church to those who knowingly or unwittingly fall short of its ideals (or who, on the matter of contraception, conscientiously disagree). In effect, the bishops have left the job of protecting those who will not or cannot abstain to the government, the advertising agencies, and the public schools.

THE NATIONAL PASTIME

WHO'S FIRST?
GOOD CATHOLICS, GOOD FANS

If recent polling data are correct, American Catholics followed this year's baseball season with particular interest. It's not news that Catholics like baseball. In this country, most people do. The major leagues posted record attendance figures this season for the fifth straight time, and TV ratings have never been better.

But Catholics pay more attention to the game than just about anyone else in America. According to figures from a CBS News/*New York Times* survey, more than two-thirds of all Catholics, and more than three-quarters of all Catholic men, say they are "very" or "somewhat" interested in major league baseball. And the more devoutly Catholic you are, the more likely you are to follow the sport: Practicing Catholic males are the country's biggest big league fans. Five out of six of them express at least some interest in major league baseball this year, a figure significantly higher than the one for Catholic men who do not attend church regularly. This level of support is matched

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in America only by black men.

Curiously, church attendance has just the opposite effect on Protestants. Protestant men who go to services regularly are less inclined to follow baseball than those who go occasionally.

What makes good Catholics into such good baseball fans? Maybe it's the intangibles. Both the game and the faith require detailed and early knowledge of an arcane set of rules. Traditions are sacrosanct; habits become rituals. Patience is a virtue. The slogan of the 1973 New York Mets says it all: "Ya Gotta Believe."

Perhaps the ties are even more mystical than that. A character in the movie *Bull Durham* says that the number of beads in a rosary is the same as the number of stitches in a regulation baseball. Who knows what other invisible connections exist?

Or is it just geography? The national pastime, after all, is not equally popular all across the country. Interest in the sport dwindles in areas—like the South and rural regions—that are the farthest from big league ballparks and broadcasts. Americans who are geographically closer to baseball are also more interested in the game, and that is where Catholics are most likely to be found.

But look only at Midwesterners, for example, or city dwellers, and the same split between Catholics and Protestants appears. Catholics in nearly every part of the country are more interested in baseball than their Protestant neighbors. There's something about being a Catholic that encourages interest in baseball, and geography has little to do with it.

Nor can the Catholic penchant for baseball be chalked up to the number of Hispanics who follow both the faith and the sport. Non-Hispanic Catholics still maintain a measurable edge over non-Catholics in their love of the sport.

No one has an entirely satisfactory explanation of Catholics' interest in baseball. Certainly not the National League or American League front offices, which do not conduct surveys of fans. "I'd rather not speculate on that," said Cindy David, a spokeswoman for major league baseball. "I think you'd have to ask [Catholics] themselves why they like the game."

The CBS News/*New York Times* survey is no help: It did not ask respondents why they follow the sport. (It was conducted in April at the start of the Pete Rose scandal, and additional baseball questions related entirely to gambling. Questions on religion were included because the Supreme Court was about to hear oral arguments in the *Webster* abortion case.)

The pattern isn't new. The same pollsters asked the same question in 1985, during that year's brief players' strike, and found that Catholics led non-Catholics back then, with the sport just about as popular among Catholics as it is today.

Just possibly, there is no great mystery. Consider which industries buy time for commercials to run between innings. The next survey should look for a correlation between the number of beer-drinking baseball fans and the number of Catholic beer-drinkers. The data may provide grounding for a new mark of the one true church. KEATING HOLLAND

Keating Holland, formerly manager of surveys for CBS News, recently launched his own firm, Mercury Survey Research, in Washington, D.C. In consequence he drinks the cheapest beer available.

REPORT ON ARGENTINA

THE GENERALS DON'T REPENT
BUT THEY'LL TAKE A PARDON

In his moving work *Prisoner Without a Name, Cell Without a Number*, Jacobo Timerman reflected on his thirty-one months of imprisonment and torture by the armed forces of Argentina: "I know that the Argentine people will not cease to weep for its dead, because throughout its often brutal history, it has remained loyal to its tragedies. I know it will succeed in overcoming the paranoids of every extreme, the cowards of every sector. And it will learn how to be happy."

Well, that learning process continues. The problem is that it seems to be inexorably moving in the wrong direction. Gone are those euphoric days in April 1987 when then-President Raul Alfonsin rallied half-a-million Argentinians in the Plaza de Mayo in defense of democracy, then flew personally to receive the surrender of embittered military rebels. Gone, in fact, is Alfonsin. His Radical party, reeling under capital flight, inflation that reached 196 percent per month earlier this year, and continued flare-ups by military rebels, was thrashed in recent elections by the Peronist Justicialist party of Carlos Saul Menem. Adding insult to injury, Alfonsin was forced by economic choas to cut short his presidential term, handing over power to the flamboyant Menem in July five months early.

Peronism is a curious creature, described alternatively as "an emotional relationship with a candidate by people who understand nothing of platforms and policies," and as "the worst of both possible worlds—socialism without a plan and capitalism without a free market." Menem, having won on themes of populism and plenty, now vows to overhaul the tax collection system, attack the bloated public sector, and end commodity subsidies, ushering in what he blithely dubs "private enterprise and free trade with social justice incorporated."

Menem thinks he has a better idea about Argentina's other nagging crisis, too—the problem of the Argentine military. During the military's turn in power from 1976-1983, as many as nine thousand Argentinians died in detention after the military was unleashed in a "dirty war" to squash the urban terrorism and insurrectionary tactics of the Montonero guerrilla movement. Thousands of others were detained and tortured. In the process of punishment that began in 1983 when civilians returned to power, a dozen top military figures were tried, convicted, and imprisoned. In the wake of military discontent (three-quarters of the military officers refused to move their units against military rebels in the Easter Sunday, 1987 uprising), Alfonsin pushed through the Congress a *punto final*—a deadline, February 22, 1988, by which all human rights charges against military officers had to be filed. Human rights groups fought the measure, lost, and filed charges before the deadline against up to 450 more officers implicated in "dirty war" crimes. Later, Alfonsin moved

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to immunize junior officers who were "only" following orders.

Menem, who himself spent time in jail under the military regime, has taken the matter further. The first week of October, Menem pardoned nearly 280 persons convicted or accused in connection with the "dirty war" and subsequent military uprisings against the Alfonsin government. Though some of those pardoned were former Montonero guerrillas, most of the pardons went to officers directly responsible for thousands of murders, rapes, tortures, and kidnappings. Explained by Menem as a "way to incorporate the military into the democratic process" and as a "healing of wounds," the move confirms instead the continued power of military circles over the civilian government and Peronist complicity in the exercise of that power. (Anticipating just such a pardon, over 150,000 Argentinians packed the broad boulevards of Buenos Aires on September 8, urging Menem to hold the convicted and the accused to the letter of the law. Prominent among the demonstrators were thousands of Menem's Peronist brethren, led by party deputies hoisting a placard that read: "We who voted for Menem are against the pardons." Fifty thousand more marched in other Argentine cities. Human rights activists now talk of forcing a plebiscite to override the pardons.)

On the other side, Argentine military officers speak bitterly of "psychological encirclement." And the military does constitute a tightly-wound subculture, which commands little popular support and is the object of accumulated grievances owing to its repressive role. With the defeat in the Falklands/Malvinas war at the hands of Britain, the military proved themselves more adept at shooting and torturing their own people than engaging in serious war-fighting. One example of the prevailing attitude is a captain in the Navy, Alfredo Astiz, who was directly implicated in the disappearance, torture, and death of a young Swiss-Argentinian woman during the "dirty war." He was promoted, over Alfonsin's protests. On the other hand, one Jorge Luis Mittelbach, a lieutenant colonel with thirty years' service, was remanded to the military stockade for thirty days last year for publicly speculating that his consistent passover for promotion was due to his refusal to torture prisoners during the military regime.

"Since a pardon doesn't eliminate the crime, the military [will] not be satisfied with [a pardon]," says Emilio Mignone, head of the Center for Legal and Social Studies, a human rights group. "What they want is a vindication for what they did and after that they'll be wanting a monument in the Plaza de Mayo."

In fact, the military will take the pardons, though they feel they've committed no crime. In the words of renegade Lt. Colonel Aldo Rico, they "were engaged in a just and necessary war to assure the historical continuity of the nation." They want the public to accept that view of their action—in other words, a complete vindication. Additionally, they have seen military spending fall from 4.6 percent of the budget in 1983 to 2 percent in 1989. They want more money for the military, better salaries.

While it remains to be seen whether Menem will give the military all it desires of him, the initial signs are not good. As army chief of staff, Menem appointed a darling of the military establishment, Gen. Isidro Caceres, who once served as a henchman to (now-pardoned) ex-President Jorge Videla during the dark years. As defense minister, Menem turned his back on the kind of constitutionalist military men favored by Alfonsin and picked Italo Luder. Luder, as interim president briefly in 1975, signed a blank check to the military authorizing them to pull out all the stops in "annihilating subversive elements." Great bunch of guys, huh?

The good news in all this is that, for the first time since 1928, power was passed peacefully from one civilian president to another. The bad news is that, as in much of Latin America—and despite the much-ballyhooed wave of democratic revolution—civil society in Argentina still seems all too dependent on a military that, in the words of one Peronist analyst, "is on the fringes of Argentine reality." Menem apparently believes that moving the society closer to the fringe is preferable to the admittedly difficult chore of redefining and restructuring the institution itself. And that makes any celebration of democratic transition and calls for "social justice" seem hollow indeed.

PATRICK LACEFIELD

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OF SEVERAL MINDS David R. Carlin, Jr.

EDUCATION ISN'T A PROBLEM

IT'S MORE LIKE A MYSTERY

America's education problems were once again put on the national front burner for a few days in late September when President Bush hosted an "education summit" for the governors. Whether education will stay on the front burner is another question, and whether it makes any real difference if it stays there or not is another question still.

Considered from a symbolic point of view, the site of the summit, the University of Virginia, was perfectly chosen. It was Thomas Jefferson, an "education president" if ever there was one, who founded the university and designed its original campus, the loveliest academic quadrangle in America. At Charlottesville, nearly as much as at Monticello, not far away, you can almost touch Jefferson; you don't have to be a believer in ghosts to feel his presence hovering over the campus. If the ancients were right in their belief that the *genius loci* can confer blessings, then the education summit must have been greatly blessed.

But we need more than blessings to solve America's education problems.

For one thing, the word "problem" itself

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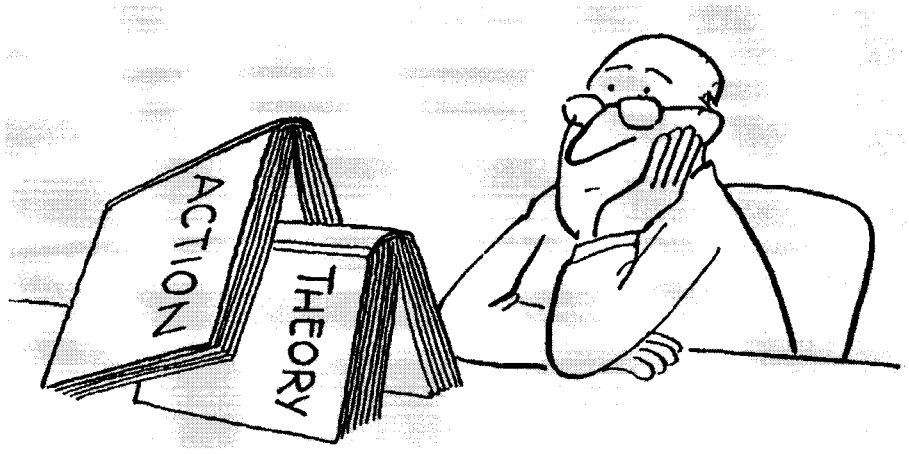
is problematic. To describe something as a problem is to imply that a potential solution exists. "Problem" and "solution" are complementary terms, like "up" and "down," "father" and "son," "cause" and "effect." Neither member of the pair makes sense without the other. To say, as we do nowadays, that the United States suffers from grave educational problems is not of course to say that solutions to those problems are easily discovered or cheaply paid for. But to discuss this question in terms of problems is to say that we can find solutions if we look hard enough and long enough; that we can put those solutions into effect if we are ready to pay the necessary price; that it's largely a question of national will and priorities; that if we can put a man on the moon we must be able to put knowledge that Columbus sailed the ocean blue in 1492 into the head of every college senior; and so forth.

The French philosopher Gabriel Marcel suggested that there are certain difficulties which are not susceptible of solution, though they may be given a response that is something other than a solution. He called such difficulties mysteries. Thus the celebrated Problem of Evil: to Dr. Pangloss it was a problem, hence a difficulty admitting of a solution; but to Marcel, as to Job, it was a mystery, a difficulty that demanded a response, but that response would hardly constitute a solution.

I am not arguing that our educational difficulties are quite so intractable as the mystery that faced Job on his dunghill. But I believe they are far more intractable than we normally give them credit for. When I listen to our political and educational leadership discuss their solutions to the sorry state of American education, I sometimes have the odd feeling that I'm present at a convention of Dr. Panglosses, or that I'm listening to a dramatic reading from one of Voltaire's less witty satires.

For instance, our education reformers almost invariably talk as though schooling and education were the same thing, as though, in other words, schools are society's only agencies of education—forgetting that families, peer groups, TV, record albums, churches, Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts, the Y, and so on, are also agencies of education. Oh, the reformers of course acknowledge this as an abstract proposition. But when they come down to cases, when they talk about the shortcomings of American education and how to remedy them, it is always the school they focus on, not the family, the peer group, etc.



"What good does it do," they will object, "to focus on these other agencies of education, since as public policymakers we have no control over them? All we control are schools; hence all we talk about are schools." Fair enough. But please, then, don't advertise your discussion of schools as a discussion of education. If you gather the governors to meet with the ghost of Jefferson to talk about schools, that's OK; but please call it a "schooling summit," not an "education summit." Jefferson would understand. In his time he realized that cultivation of the nation's character and intellect depended on more than schools, though it depended on schools as well. Thus his great concern with a free press, with democratic political structures, with a proper balance between agricultural and urban occupations—all these, along with schools, were elements, as he saw it, of a system of national education.

But to abstain from confusing education with schooling is not simply a matter of truth in labeling. Such confusion makes it impossible to talk intelligently about schooling, makes it impossible to give a realistic estimate of what can or cannot be accomplished in the narrow field of school reform. Perhaps this explains why three out of every four school reform proposals turn out to be crackpot ideas, which, when implemented, leave the last state of the school worse than the first. No more than anything else does schooling exist in a vacuum; like everything else, it lives and moves in an environment. Nonetheless, otherwise intelligent people, who would never dream of discussing diplomacy, for instance, without situating such a discussion in its military, political, and economic context, do not hesitate, when they put on their educational reformer hats, to discuss schooling as though the social-cultural context were far less complex than the context of diplomacy, almost as though schools had no social-cultural context at all.

Jefferson was a man of the Enlightenment, and he had both the virtues and the defects of the Enlightenment mentality. This mentality had its blind spots (Jefferson, for instance, had no use for Plato, and Voltaire thought Shakespeare was talented but crude, not so fine a writer of tragedy as Joseph Addison), but it was never so blind as to imagine that the education of society is provided through schools alone. When it wanted to reform the world's education, which was its principal ambition, it didn't tinker with the schools. Instead it published newspapers, journals, books, encyclopedias; it created salons, clubs, libraries, academies; it suppressed monasteries and Jesuits; and for good measure it threw in the American and French revolutions.

The last thing I want to recommend is anything quite so cataclysmic as a reprise of the eighteenth century. But I strongly suspect that our "problems" in education have gone well beyond the point where school-reform "solutions" will any longer do the job. We may not be facing a "mystery" exactly, but we are facing a difficulty that cannot be discussed intelligently within the framework of conventional education discourse. □

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RENEWING THE EARTH

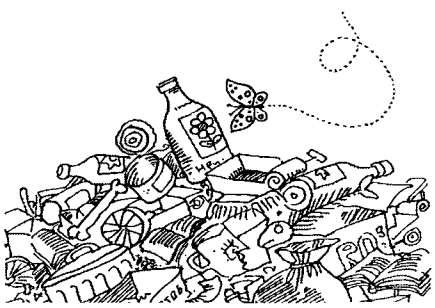
GETTING CONVINCED, GETTING PRACTICAL

On Pentecost Sunday this year I visited a church where the homilist's theme was concern for the environment. His liturgical text was the Alleluia verse, "Send forth thy Spirit and they shall be created, *thou shalt renew the face of the earth*." He had been moved to make the connection, he said, after hearing Theodore Hesburgh, C.S.C., report on a trip to Antarctica to study the effects of the hole in the ozone layer—only one of the results of our pollution of earth, water, and air.

This parish priest's awakening to the environmental crises is one example of the way the realization of our peril is spreading. Even before the current thaw, visitors returning from Russia were impressed by the openness of Soviet citizens in demanding reforms to reduce pollution. In Great Britain, this year's European Community elections showed that the number of voters choosing Green party delegates had risen from a few thousand to around 50,000—not enough to elect representatives but enough to ensure that environmental concerns be considered. The U.S. and some thirty other countries, in an effort to save the ozone layer, have agreed that starting in 1990 they will freeze the production of CFCs (chlorine-containing chlorofluorocarbons used in plastics, propellant containers, and solvents) at 1986 levels, and by 1998 reduce them by half. Now there is serious discussion of phasing them out entirely by the year 2000.

(Since Pentecost Sunday, scientists report that this year's ozone hole covers 10 million square miles and that ozone is decreasing at the rate of 1.5 percent a day. A 1 percent decrease in ozone means that more cancer-causing, ultra-violet rays reach the earth and can cause skin cancer rates to rise from 3 to 5 percent.)

Alarmed by knowledge like this, people are dropping their differences to bring about action on the environment. This summer in a town on Cape Cod, in one of the lesser examples, the local fishermen's association joined forces with an association of conservation-minded retirees and summer property owners—their traditional adversaries—to try to save the waterways. In September, on a greater plane, representatives of industry, government, and the media met to explore "what could be done to help planet earth." In



sessions sponsored by an Ohio corporation, NASA (The National Aeronautic and Space Administration), and NOAA (The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), participants agreed to drop arguments about what pollutes, and how much, and to concentrate on reducing the pollution they know exists.

Even more significant, perhaps, was the clean-air agreement reached on October 2 in the House of Representatives. The subcommittee on health and environment of the House energy and commerce committee unanimously approved new limits on tailpipe emissions causing smog. These are to be cut by 60 percent by 1996, and the remainder cut by 50 percent by 2006, if that proves possible. A compromise had been reached between congressmen with a heavy auto industry presence in their districts and those whose cities are choked with smog—reached, it must be noted, after years of stalemate.

But other environmental conflicts drag on. Where to deposit nuclear and other hazardous waste? How to transport it? How dangerous are insecticides and fertilizers to those who plant, reap, and eat the harvests? How badly is the soil depleted by chemicals and how dangerous is the runoff to rivers and lakes?

The average hearer of that Pentecost homily admonishing parishioners to help save the environment was, I think, at a loss. The problems are so complex that individual effort seems puny at best. Clearly we have to stop despoiling the earth before the Lord will renew its face, but how?

Perhaps the homilist could have gone beyond his expression of concern to inspire action: the recruiting of a parish task force to think of ways to prepare the earth for renewal might have produced many suggestions. Such a task force could propose, for instance, that the parish sponsor recycling collections—an effort which could be as lucrative for the parish charities as it would be virtuous.

They could suggest eschewing the parishioners' use of fluorocarbons as far as it was possible. The supermarket within the parish boundaries might be encouraged to offer paper bags equipped with handles like those in gourmet stores instead of the easy-to-carry plastic bags. Or, better yet, since even paper has a long-lasting residue, parishioners might use string bags (like those used abroad); these could be sold by some parish society. The supermarket could also be encouraged to provide fruit and vegetables free of insecticides and to sell staples in simple bags rather than layered in plastic wraps. These are all small but significant steps.

With real dedication parishioners could reduce smog-producing pollutants right now by carpooling to take shopping trips and do other errands. They could be encouraged to use nonpolluting public transportation whenever possible. If such efforts spread from parish to parish the drop in ozone in the atmosphere of a city could be significant in a very short time.

The efforts taken to protect the environment, that I noted above, did not just happen. They were the result of awareness and concern translated into patient, persistent, concerted action. This may be the Spirit at work. Our hope is that the Lord can and will renew the face of the earth when we have made it ready. Is that too much to believe? □

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LIBERATION THEOLOGY ADAPTS & ENDURES

AND KEEPS A PERSPECTIVE FROM BELOW

ARTHUR F. McGOVERN

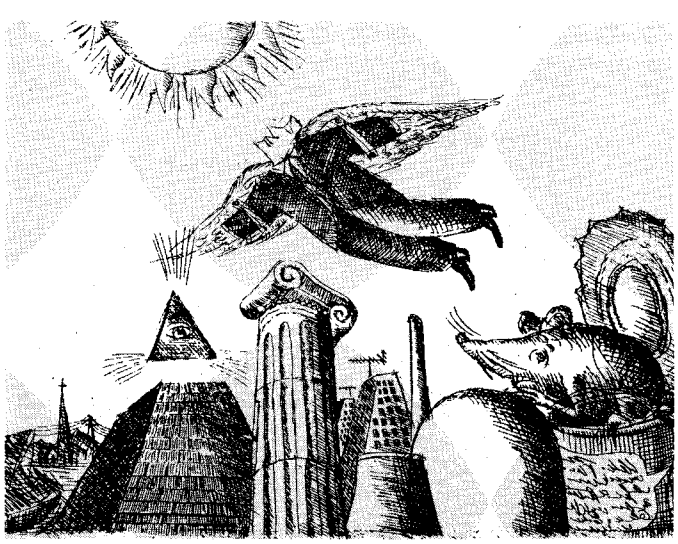
Liberation theology has proven itself far more than the "passing fad" some early critics believed it would be. It has profoundly affected the life of the church in Latin America. Theology has "come alive" and become a topic of serious interest. Where the institutional church has responded to the concerns of liberation theology, it has gained respect from the youth of Latin America. In Brazil, in the early 1960s, two-thirds of university students polled in Rio de Janeiro considered themselves unbelievers and viewed the church as "on the side of injustice." The bishops in Brazil actively fought for human rights and in defense of the poor in the late 1960s and 1970s. A new student poll in 1978 showed a striking change, with three-fourths of the students declaring themselves "believers" and favorable to the church.

The institutional church itself has accepted many of the most important points in liberation theology. The Vatican instructions acknowledged "liberation" as a valid and even essential theme of Christian revelation. The bishops at Puebla clearly affirmed a "preferential option for the poor." If the political involvement of the church remains controversial, the church has in practice devoted much greater pastoral efforts toward the poor than it did in ages past. Even Cardinal Lopez Trujillo rates concern for the poor the second most important priority for the church in Colombia, and he takes great pride in the forty new parishes created in poor barrios in five years.

If many bishops still try to restrain their clergy and religious from political involvement, they are quite unlikely to voice the unquestioned support for the status quo that once characterized much Christian teaching. In a pastoral letter of 1915, the bishops of Brazil instructed their priests to "inculcate the spirit of obedience and submission to those who govern in civil society, in religion, and in the family...to lead the faithful to accept their proper situation and the conditions in which they were born and not to hate the modest and difficult life in which Providence has placed them." A repetition of such a statement by a group of bishops would be almost inconceivable in contemporary Latin America. In principle at least, the institutional church has recognized the dignity of the poor and accepted the value most central to liberation theology: namely, that the poor should become active, participatory agents in shaping their own destinies.

U.S. theologian J. J. Moeller credits liberation theology with some important contributions to theological method. Liberation theology, says Moeller, has shown the need for theology to consider the role that socioeconomic conditions play in shaping culture and theology itself. It has shown the contribution that praxis can make to theology. It has listened to the cry of the poor, emphasizing that only by insertion into real conditions of oppression and suffering can theology be credible and the Gospel realized.

Both liberation theology and the liberation movements (ranging from Christians who opted to join guerrilla groups, through activist groups like the Christians for Socialism, to very diverse groups of Christian base communities) grew out of the same historical context, but they had different origins and have different



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identities. Liberation theology and the base community movement had parallel but distinct histories of development. Without any writings of liberation theology, radical Christian groups would still have formed in the 1960s and 1970s. In fact, groups did form in Brazil, Chile, and in Central America before the first works of liberation theology appeared. Certainly many Christians in the U.S. and Europe became politically involved in the sometimes radical movements of the 1960s without any input from liberation theology.

In Latin America, the developments in theology and in social movements cannot be separated entirely. Christian activist groups and liberation theologians often worked together; present-day liberation theologians reflect upon and give strong affirmation to ecclesial base communities. Some liberation theologians have incorporated elements of social analysis used by activist groups. A distinction, nevertheless, should still be made between liberation theology as such and liberation movements.

Some critics of liberation theology concentrate almost entirely on the social analysis and economic-political views they find in liberation theology. Almost all the works they cite date back to the 1970s, and works in theology are often lumped together with statements by the Christians for Socialism and other activist groups. Nearly all the criticisms focus on the dangers of using Marxist ideas or espousing socialism. These political concerns, moreover, prompt most of the criticisms of liberation theology as a whole. As noted earlier, very few recent works in liberation theology contain any extended treatment of social analysis, and whatever judgment one makes about the validity or weakness of social analysis in liberation theology, its broadly stated, politico-economic options appear to have very little impact on macroplans in Latin American countries. Many critics, nevertheless, continue to define liberation theology by the statements of social analysis found in its earliest writings, linking these statements with radical groups from the early 1970s.

Other critics focus on theology proper in liberation theology. Some target it as just one more expression of a modernist European theology, which they see as undermining the true, traditional faith. Others see it as a challenge to church authority and as going beyond "official teachings" of the church. Some quarrels with the Vatican remain over issues of orthodoxy, but most liberation theologians have consciously attempted to keep their theological views consistent with the central tenets of the Christian faith, and some have reformulated their views to avoid any conflict with church doctrines. Still other critics of the theology of liberation, critics like John Meier, question the soundness of biblical scholarship used in some liberation works. Some criticisms on this score appear valid, but do not take sufficiently into account liberation theology's principal concern to stress certain aspects of the Gospel that theology through the ages has downplayed or neglected. A few critics, like Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, direct their criticisms at both the social analysis and theology proper of liberation theology, but in doing so sometimes "read into" it much more than is actually stated.

Any assessment of liberation theology should also take into account the changes and developments it has undergone since its inception more than twenty years ago. Liberation theologians argued from the outset for a "contextual" theology that would reflect the culture and conditions of Latin America and not assume traditional European theology as the universal and unchanging theology of Christianity. But liberation theology itself has reflected changing conditions in Latin America. Its first formulations often mirrored attitudes prevalent in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These years were, in Gustavo Gutierrez's words, a time of great "revolutionary ferment." Liberation theology thus called for revolutionary change. Even many in the hierarchy, however, expressed themselves in similar language. The Peruvian bishops, who a dozen years later would wrestle with a decision about condemning liberation theology, wrote a pastoral letter in 1971 calling for revolutionary change. "To construct a just society in Latin America and in Peru signifies liberation from the present situation of dependency, oppression, and exploitation in which the great majority of our people live." The people are called to shape their own destiny. "This means that the people ought to have a real and direct participation in a revolutionary action against oppressive structures and attitudes and for a just society for all."

Aspirations for a dramatic change and liberation of the poor influenced the social analysis first used. Dependency theory, in its strong form, placed the blame for underdevelopment on advanced countries of the North; capitalism became for many the single cause and catch-all explanation for the misery in Latin America. Socialism represented the hope for change. Social analysis and solutions thus were repeatedly stated in broad, global terms of ultimate causes and ultimate aspirations. Marxism did serve as a "tool" to challenge long-dominant ideologies that claimed to explain underdevelopment as "backwardness," and it pointed to "exploitation" of the poor as the true cause. The initial importance given to the exodus as a biblical theme captured the sense of a dramatic breakaway from oppression into a new world of liberation.

Even this initial period, however, did not simply represent a "Marxist phase." The initial impulse of liberation theology came from a new Christian awareness of the sufferings of the poor and a conviction that God remains present and active in the struggles of the poor to liberate themselves. In Chile, the Christians for Socialism movement, Chilean theologians like Pablo Richard and Diego Irarrazal, the Brazilian Hugo Assmann and others were swept up by Marxist ideas and translated the "will of God" into socialist aspirations. Even then, however, theologians like Gutierrez, José Comblin, and Segundo Galilea distanced themselves from Marxist options and warned against christianizing any revolutionary ideology. Juan Luis Segundo has always used Marxism quite selectively, balanced with theories from a large array of other social theorists. Jon Sobrino does little social analysis, and what he does express does not reflect Marxism. Even the critics of Leonardo Boff do not accuse him of Marxism.

Liberation theologians use some elements of Marxist analysis because they see it as the principal method of critiquing capitalism

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(which they believe is the major cause of Latin America's problems) and because some of its ideas help to generate insights about the situation of Latin America. Liberation theology makes use of Marxist concepts but these concepts do not retain the same meanings they have in classic Marxism. "Praxis" connotes the living out of the Christian faith, not Marxist tactics of change. "Class struggle" expresses the reality of social conflict in Latin America, not a program to stir up hatred or to eliminate some ruling class. Liberation theologians speak of the "poor" of Latin America, with a special emphasis on landless peasants and those left marginalized and excluded from real participation in the economic-political life of Latin America. They do not focus on the industrial "proletariat" that Marxists have viewed as the bearer of emancipation.

One might still question the adequacy of liberation theology's identification of capitalism as the principal source of Latin America's problems. Some would certainly criticize the openness of many liberation theologians to collaboration with Marxists. But liberation theology clearly makes "critical" use of Marxist ideas. Otto Maduro's reflections on its use of Marxism appear quite accurate: liberation theology "borrows" from Marxist analysis but criticizes too many aspects of Marxism to consider it a guiding force of analysis.

Liberation theologians have also modified their politico-economic views in recent years. The new political context in many parts of Latin America has led liberation theologians to talk about building a "participatory democracy" from within civil society. Socialism no longer remains an unqualified paradigm for liberation aspirations.

In theology itself, liberation theology has turned increasingly to Jesus. It relies less on Exodus and Old Testament sources. It recognizes especially the suffering and cross of Jesus, not with a traditional message of "accepting sufferings as part of one's lot in life," but as part of a painful process of struggle leading to hope, resurrection, and liberation. Liberation theology has expanded into many new areas of theology. Its emphasis on spirituality has been especially prominent. Vatican criticisms have undoubtedly made liberation theology more cautious, but the goal of creating a truly "integral" liberation theology proceeds from a deeper conviction than a simple political need for accommodation. The U.S. Catholic Press Association awarded prizes in 1988 to Leonardo Boff's *Passion of Christ*, Jorge Pixley's *On Exodus*, and Gutierrez's *On Job* as the outstanding books of the previous year in the categories of spirituality and biblical study, respectively. It would require incredible cynicism to perceive such works as "covers" for some political purpose.

It would require more intuitive and prescient capabilities than I possess to predict the future course that liberation theology will take or the political and religious impact it may have in years to come. Both supporters and critics alike tend to overestimate its political influence. The message of liberation theology and the development of base communities, on the other hand, have already made it possible for many poor to experience a new sense of dignity, a new awareness of God's special love for them, and an ability to work in solidarity to achieve significant social goals at community levels. "Popular movements" may indeed play a far more significant role in the future, pressing for social changes on a broader national level. But Latin American governments have proved all too adept at impeding or co-opting such movements. The United States shows no sign as yet of developing policies that go much beyond measures to make sure that "communism" does not spread.

Attitudes and decisions in the institutional church will greatly affect the future of both liberation theology and the base communities. Movements cut off from support of the church are unlikely to have great impact. Moreover, leaders in such movements may well become targets of government repression and even of elimination, if government officials see that they have no support from the institutional church. In principle, as we noted above, the institutional church has stated an option for the poor and acknowledged liberation—including socio-political transformations—as important parts of the church's mission. In practice, however, an apparent trend in the appointment of new bishops raises doubts about the church's role in any new social transformations. Priorities about maintaining orthodoxy and reasserting church authority appear to outweigh social concerns. Since Pope John Paul II came to office, he has replaced progressives with conservatives in nine of Brazil's thirty-six archdioceses, with only three progressive bishops appointed during the same period. The diocese of Recife and Olinda, for years one of the most progressive dioceses in Brazil, now has a conservative bishop. Peru, I am told, now has seven *Opus Dei* bishops. The bishop of Cusco has dismantled social centers once looked upon as models of work for change. The new head of the bishops conference in Peru, Bishop Ricardo Durand, is one of the fiercest critics of liberation theology. This trend in the hierarchy, combined with the worsening of economic conditions in most Latin American countries, does not presage a very promising future for the hopes expressed in liberation theology.

Some rays of hope, nevertheless, continue to break through. In 1988, reports from Bolivia and Guatemala spoke of the reawakening of social concern within the church, with bishops in those countries becoming more outspoken on social issues. In Chile, the defeat of General Pinochet in a referendum election gave new hope for democracy. But above all the remarkable capacity of so many of the poor in Latin America to keep going and even to celebrate life, joined with the continued dedication and vitality of many who work with the poor, testify that hope remains very much alive in Latin America despite disheartening conditions. To be ultimately successful, however, liberation work with the poor does require support from the institutional church (though church efforts alone will not decide the outcome). One can only hope that the church's option for the poor will, in time, override other concerns and prove a positive force for change.

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On a theological level, the output of books on liberation theology continues to be impressive. Some dozen or more books have been published in a projected 50-volume series out of Petropolis (and scheduled also for translation into English). Leonardo Boff and Juan Luis Segundo have been prolific in their output of works. Enthusiasm still runs high. On the other hand, doing creative theology from one basic paradigm (challenging and deideologizing older interpretations of Christianity and gaining new insights from the perspective of the poor) may reach a limit. European theology appears to have lost much of the vitality so evident in the epoch of Rahner, Congar, Schillebeeckx, Moltmann, and the generation of theologians who combined new biblical exegesis with the "rediscovery" of the humanity of Jesus. The liberation theologians prominent a decade or more ago remain the key figures in liberation theology today; new theologians are needed to carry forward the tradition. Women theologians could further enrich the movement.

As liberation theology moves toward the start of a new century, I would like to see innovations along several lines. Liberation theology has matured sufficiently to include greater internal self-criticism. A danger exists, certainly, that any self-criticism may be used by opponents to put down liberation theology or to give the appearance of dissension and division. But healthy, supportive criticism could enhance the vitality of liberation theology and gain for it greater support. On the level of social analysis the global "dependent capitalism" critique has limited usefulness in developing a realistic "praxis" for social change. (More recent works in liberation theology contain very little social analysis, even of a macro kind.) I would hope that more specific analyses would develop with a view to formulation of concrete strategies on specific issues like land reform, but also to make popular Christian movements more politically effective at a national level. Liberation theologians and the popular movements they support need to move beyond identifying the causes of poverty and underdevelopment and give more attention to how the poor can become more effective agents of social change.

Part of the development of strategies of social change might include, in reflecting on the experiences of the poor, a greater articulation of the values and specific aspirations of the poor (over and above the ultimate goal of liberation). Theological reflection might also focus on the sources of strength that enable the poor to survive and even to celebrate despite the odds they face. To complement development of strategies for social change, liberation theology could also serve the poor and pastoral agents by developing explicit ethical norms that could guide in evaluating what "means" are appropriate to Christian change and what means are not.

Certainly developments that do occur will come from within the movement of liberation theology and not from outside observers. The difficulties under which liberation theologians work may also greatly constrict what they can achieve. Many must work under threats from the government and opposition from church authorities. Most are already spread thin trying to meet requests from a multitude of sources; they have limited resources and only so much energy to give. What liberation theology has already achieved is of great significance. It has drawn the attention of the church and of many persons in various parts of the world, to the sufferings of the poor in Latin America. It has challenged us to rethink the ways in which we understand and live out our faith. It has brought pride to the church in Latin America and made theology a subject of vital interest. In a very real way it has made visible the sign that Jesus gave to the disciples of John the Baptist: "The poor have the good news preached to them." Liberation theology strives to keep alive the hopes embodied in Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God, so that one day the great hope expressed in the Book of Revelation may be celebrated: "See, I am making all things new" (Rev. 21:5). □

Roy Shepard

The Interloper

For serenity we come
and a sense of history

bleached and charcoal
rubbings of sentiments

dried out to smiles
and languid assurance

that over the long
haul nothing is held

against us. Then who

is this come posting
a hundred years late

a date disturbing old
bones with new?

No relation we claim
here graves of our own

choice, freely electing
familiarity with worn

markers, making peace
with death over

the moat of centuries.
This freshly cut

hole trespasses.

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DOWNHILL JOURNEYS

'QUEEN OF HEARTS' & 'IN COUNTRY'

In my time as film critic at *Commonweal*, I have often wanted to invent a new prize: overrated foreign film of the season. My current candidate is the Anglo-Italian *Queen of Hearts*, which has been winning plaudits from critics and cultured audiences this fall; a mini-cult hit, it's cutely advertised as a "tale of romance, revenge, and cappucino." Many viewers love its warm-hearted family storytelling, its magical realistic mode, and its quirky, lyrical characters. I am so rarely a curmudegon that readers will have to forgive me this time, but the film bored me no end. Why?

The opening is certainly thrilling. Two young lovers, Nonno (Vittorio Duse) and Rosa (Anita Zagaria), are separated by a feud between their families; they flee as her wedding to another man approaches, running through the narrow streets and alleys of a small Italian city, eventually scrambling to the top of a tower while being pursued by the plump but vindictive intended, Barbarricia (Vittorio Amandola). He corners them in the tower, pulls out a knife, and salivates at the moment of revenge. Suddenly they make a fantastically lucky but utterly realistic escape.

It's a beautiful moment—and a dangerous one for the rest of the film. It never regains that power and speed, or the bright and gorgeous allure of the Italian cityscape. Director Jon Amiel (of the BBC's "The Singing Detective") never again achieves that blend of the real and the unexpected. After they escape to London and have children, the rest of the story is told from the point of view of Nonno's and Rosa's youngest son, Danilo (Joseph Long). With another surprise deliverance, Nonno acquires the money to start (what else!) the "Lucky Cafe" where he peddles his special brew of cappucino.

Although the cafe scenes are at first lively, the narration drags. Danilo just doesn't have the same edgy appeal as the youthful narrator, say, of *My Life as a Dog*. The problem isn't just oversentimentality; it's a meandering story line that makes Nonno's irresponsibility and Danilo's romanticism irritating. When Barbarricia—the jilted fiancé—arrives, now suave but still intent on revenge, you know Nonno's romantic irresponsibility is going to cost dearly. And you start rooting for the enemy.

Rosa's mother, Madama Sibilla, provides some relief; she's played by British character actress Eileen Way, a vet of *Poldark* (his Aunt Agatha), *By the Sword Divided* (an old crone), and films going back to the Kirk Douglas/Tony Curtis whammer, *The Vikings* (which she spoils for Rosa's family by giving away the ending when it plays on TV). She also has a great scene in a confessional. But her refreshing crankiness soon becomes routine; she is also made to lose whist games to Nonno's father after he follows the ensembles to London. Rosa is too little on view in the film's middle; it could have used more of her Sophia Loren-like beauty and serenity. In 1989, romantically lyrical irresponsibility is a tiresome, tedious theme.

People praise a movie like this for some good reasons, perhaps, but also one bad: at least—they say—it had no chase scenes. But it did. And it was the best scene in the movie.

In Country, based on the novel by Bobbie Ann Mason, has (surprisingly) only one good line: "this town," a teenager laments, "is nowhere without a mall." The remark occurs in a bedroom scene between the heroine (Emily Lloyd) and a girlfriend; they are moaning about the limits of Hopewell, Kentucky, and yearning for the bright lights and big city of Paducah. That's it for the sparkle.

Though it has a decent framework, the film never builds to anything. Lloyd (a young English actress, from *Wish You Were Here*) manages a Kentucky accent and her larger yearning nicely: she wants to know more about Vietnam—"in country," as grunt lingo had it— where her father died and her uncle (Bruce Willis) became a nervous wreck. Her desire and determination to dig into the past carry the film to its conclusion at the Vietnam War Memorial in Washington. Although strong and affecting, these closing scenes don't really grow out of the emotions that the plot evokes or any inevitable design in the drama. Except to date it from her high school graduation, director Norman Jewison (*A Soldier's Story*, *Agnes of God*, *Moonstruck*) doesn't really explain why Lloyd's interest in Vietnam comes to a head. Although she has lived with her uncle for at least a decade, she suddenly wants to know everything. Why?

Fortunately, the cast provides some incidental pleasures. Willis, who became annoying with his smart-aleck mannerisms on TV's *Moonlighting*, does enough with the limp screenplay to suggest some of the suffering many vets still feel. Lloyd's paternal grandmother (Peggy Rae), stands out as a hefty, down-home icon of all-American bounty, serving up heaps of potatoes before leading dinnertime grace; her farm scenes are straight from the myth of a lost continent called integrity. Lloyd's mother (Joan Allen) proves likable despite her initial insensivity and her desire to live only in the present and future. Judith Ivey—sashaying about with her usual buoyant energy—bubbles up as Willis's old girlfriend, then disappears.

In Country giveth and taketh away, interesting us in these plot lines, then dropping them. I don't know Mason's novel firsthand, but one feels this film version must be only skimming the surface. At least, it (along with the current, less successful, *Welcome Home*) tries to provide more sympathetic treatment of vets on screen, where they have often been depicted as militarists (Bruce Dern in *Coming Home*) or maladjusted kooks (as in *First Blood*, *Taxi Driver*). And Lloyd (still in her teens) gives it a steady drive; her innocent search for answers is complemented by a perfect face, which combines baby fat, nascent glamour, and a glowing, alert, quick-witted intelligence.

There is, at last, the pilgrimage to the Vietnam War Memorial. The movie doesn't do much with the monument; it probably could have been better photographed.

Until *Platoon*, critics often asked when we would get great Vietnam movies; maybe they were looking for art from the wrong medium. A brilliant conception, both trendily abstract and tra-

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ditionally representative, a granite enigma and mass tombstone, the Vietnam Memorial is perhaps the finest work of public sculpture in America. *In Country* does well to drape itself over its mute volume. Would the whole film had one-tenth of its power.

On the Metroliner from Washington recently, a young woman sat down next to me. She was wearing a souvenir beltbag from a preview of *Casualties of War.* She was, it turned out, an actress (with a bit part in the cult hit *Hairspray*); she knew the Coppola family and Cher. We talked generally about films, then I asked her how she liked *Casualties*; she said she went because of her father who had died in Vietnam before she was born. I wondered at how young she was, how young he must have been, what sadness her mother must have felt, and by what justice I—and not her father, my contemporary—sat there discussing her career. And as the nation sped on past us, swifter than memory, I could only think: God bless the dead. TOM O'BRIEN

BOOKS

A devotion to rough edges

HARP
John Gregory Dunne
Simon & Schuster, $18.95, 235 pp.

Raymond A. Schroth

Sometimes a memoir—as distinct from an autobiography, which makes heavier intellectual and emotional demands—is best read, as well as written, in midlife, when both the author and the audience, perhaps moved by an unexpected brush with mortality, are just beginning seriously to probe their pasts—with an eye for pattern, for chance, for lost options, for taken-for-granted blessings.

To the artist, the probe is, at that moment, partly a literary exercise, but it is also a stocktaking: a gathering and bottling of those creative juices on which one can call for the rest of one's life, which now seems shorter than one had planned it to be.

I read John Gregory Dunne's memoir, *Harp*, between two very Dunne-like experiences. I had spent a day in Trenton, where I grew up, reviewing with my mother and brother near-forgotten photos: my grandfather John Schroth, the Trenton bottler, posed stolidly with his workmen in the 1890s, flanked by their cartons of root beer and sarsaparilla; my father in 1918, his serious face under a straw hat towering in the back row of a crowd of young men who had just enlisted in World War I; on my mother's side, the Bordentown Murphys, the lined, wise, Irish octogenarian faces of my grandmother's card club; my mother on the Georgian Court College basketball team in the 1920s and as a teacher and civic leader—Red Cross drives and Mount Carmel Guild—during World War II; my brother Dave and I with our horses and dogs, I on army artillery maneuvers in Germany in 1956. And, within a few weeks I would be in the mountains of Peru on one of those trips a writer takes not knowing precisely why, except to see a friend and to have one more experience about which one might write.

"A writer's life," says Dunne, "is his only capital, his alone to invest, and to imagine, and to reimagine." *Harp* centers around Dunne's discovery in 1987, through an EKG, of a "critical lesion" in his left anterior descending artery—what his good-humored cardiologist refers to as "the widowmaker." Reprieved by an angioplasty (a procedure by which a balloon on a catheter dissipates the plaque), but heavy with the suicide of a younger brother, the cancer deaths of two sisters, the murder of a niece, and the death at ninety of a maiden aunt, the writer reorders his life.

He and his wife (he never gives her full name), after twenty-four years in Los Angeles, move to New York. Cleaning out his files, he rummages through and discards old letters, notes, and rejected story ideas, recalls his parents' deaths—his surgeon father of a heart attack in 1946, his mother of cancer in 1974—the Sisters of Mercy who ran St. Joseph's Cathedral School in Hartford like steelworkers; his Frankfurt whoring and NATO alert exercises as a Pfc. artilleryman in Germany in 1956; his travels with "his wife" to El Salvador and the West Bank, and then their 1970 quiet New Orleans visit with Walker Percy, sitting by the bayou drinking whiskey and gin and tonics as the light rain fell.

In Joan Didion's essays, John Gregory Dunne hovers off camera as a barely visible traveling companion referred to as "my husband." Though married for twenty-five years and regular collaborators on screenplays, such as the adaptation of Dunne's novel, *True Confessions*, they are neither a "team" nor competitors; but a reader who follows their work really has to make comparisons. In *Salvador*, Didion reports that she has dinner with the Salvadoran painter, Victor Barriere, grandson of a dictator who had killed up to 30,000 of his citizens. Barriere refers to former Ambassador Robert White as a "jerk" and Archbishop Oscar Romero as a "bigot"; Barriere has a "fluted" voice, and has brought along an eighteen-year-old young man he is "teaching to paint," and he lives with his mother, "a diminutive woman."

In *Harp*, Dunne reports that he has "lunch" with a "local painter" named "Hector," grandson of a "mass murderer of another era," who is "a homosexual"; Hector uses his role as a primitive art dealer to attract boys, and his mother, who is four-and-a-half feet tall with huge moles on her breasts, spies on Hector and his boyfriend.

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COMMONWEAL

FOR CHRISTMAS

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What stands out, aside from the minor discrepancies, is Didion's preference to imply what Dunne virtually shouts—or Dunne's harshness.

Indeed, Dunne's devotion to his own rough edges is a trademark. Though Princeton educated, his vocabulary, particularly his addiction to one four-letter word, seems arrested at the level of his drill sergeant's. When an acquaintance writes to describe Dunne's novel, *The Red, White and Blue,* (correctly, in my judgment) as "the most hate-filled, death-filled, contempt-for-humanity work I have ever read," Dunne sends an admittedly mean-spirited reply. When the young man who strangled Dunne's niece does not receive the death penalty, Dunne hopes he will be sodomized in prison and die of AIDS.

Most of the momentum of *Harp* comes from two journeys in search of the past, both failures: one to his old army barracks in Wertheim and the other to Ireland in search of his maternal grandfather's baptismal record, which would make Dunne eligible for an Irish passport. I remember that when I arrived in Germany in January 1956, our battalion commander told us there was a reasonable chance that the Russians would attack that winter; with such an incentive, our combat alert exercises—everyone on the road and ready to roll within an hour—took on a new level of drama. Dunne returns to the scene of these dramas hoping the writer in him will recover from this most formative period, when the boy learns the rawness of the man's world, some clue to what he has become today. But he resurrects the memory of another death, the buddy killed on alert when his truck overturned, and discovers a "new" army, soft with egalitarianism— What if the Russians attack while the brigade colonel is serving his turn as school bus monitor?—and middle-class values.

Although Dunne told a *New York Times* interviewer in 1982 that he still starts to bless himself when he hears a fire engine, he long ago rejected his Irish background and his Catholic faith; rather than integral to his identity, they seem to have been burdens which the writer shed as he moved from West Hartford to Princeton to Frankfurt to Los Angeles to New York; then they become buried treasures, like the forgotten photographs, which the journalist-novelist might milk for one more story. In Stokestown, Ireland, he finds no record of Dominick Francis Burns, but in Roscommon he wanders into two funeral Masses in Sacred Heart Church for the same woman, Hanoria Dufficy, who died at ninety-eight though, says Father Ned, "the whole town was pulling for her to make a hundred years young."

Dunne ends his memoir as gently as he can, his deep—but unexamined—anger perhaps muted and tempered by the beauty of some of the lives he has recalled, particularly his Aunt Harriet's, and with an unspoken sense of himself as a survivor. "For now, I just want to get through the next book—that's all you can hope to do," he told an interviewer seven years ago. He is now no more or less a "harp" than he was then. He is a middle-aged married man on a journey with a notebook and the courage to share the journey's humor and its pain. □

REMARKABLE FOR WHAT IT OMITS

AMONG SCHOOLCHILDREN
Tracy Kidder
Houghton Mifflin, $19.95, 340 pp.

Marie Ponsot

Here is a book of great charm on a subject of the widest interest, public education. Its plan is promising: an anecdotal story of life in a fifth-grade class, described by a daily observer who supplements his notes with interviews. Tracy Kidder tells what Chris Zajac's teaching looked like to him, September to June, recently, in Holyoke, Massachusetts.

Kidder's perceptions of chalk-grit, teacher's gestures, noise, sweet small faces laughing or tear-wet, stream in a continuum on which touching anecdotes ride. A scatter of paragraphs (at the level, say, of TV documentaries) gives little general accounts of related matters: discipline, immigration, the town of Holyoke, the life of Chris Zajac and of a student's father, for example.

Tracy Kidder is an attentive, fluent, and successful writer (*House,* and the Pulitzer-Prize-winning, *The Soul of a New Machine*). He writes nonfiction prose, the genre which it's been the special genius of twentieth-century literature to deepen and widen. Modestly he offers no big ideas about pedagogy or education politics. He draws no conclusions. The concreteness of his anecdotal portrait has the readability and convincing detail of all narrative.

He is not entirely a stranger to seeing a class from the lonelier side of the desk. His mother taught in a Syosset high school, and his bibliography suggests that he's as interested as most of us in reading about public education. His happy format calls for no expertise on our part, or his, beyond that interest. He lets us consider not issues (like what to teach when, or what's perception) but one man's view of one example, one year, one place.

Dailiness has a wonderful ability to engage us. Child after child in Chris Zajac's class of twenty (20!) comes alive to our thoughts. It's a poignant experience.

Narratives of teachers and learners have a grand long tradition, beginning with Plato's vision of Socrates. We're lucky to have many in this country, mostly by teachers—from Anne Sullivan's work with Helen Keller to Philip Lopate's eye-opening *Being with Children.* Their vivid first-person accounts describe the day-to-day work and the distress, joy, hope, and lethargy that go with it. Yet they also propose their different, passionately held ideas about the nature of schooling, drawn from the experiences they record. They evaluate; they explore means, results, plans for next semester. They speculate; they try to define themselves as teachers. Concerning such analytic understanding, *Among Schoolchildren* is remarkable for what it

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omits. We see many small events and suspect many forces are at play, but the text shows (and declines to tell more) how things appear to be, fluid, felt, and unminded.

When Chris Zajac—known to us in Kidder's version—expresses guilt or sympathy for students rather than ideas about teaching, Kidder is careful to avoid assessments, either for her or on his own. She is guided by a high moral awareness of the importance of being a good, reliable person and carrying out the duties of her state in life. She spends a spring vacation on a tour of Puerto Rico, and returns to her childhood parish, now a Puerto Rican neighborhood, for Sunday Mass, as she struggles to erase her prejudicial stereotyping of Puerto Ricans.

That Mrs. Zajac is able to love each student equally is a real human accomplishment. That she's not able to expect success of them equally is a misery we all know. Her opinion of their needs and possibilities is fairly fixed by the end of the first week. And her worst and best expectations come true. (Another way to say this: she soon knows which students she can reach/teach, and which she can't.)

It's a tribute to Tracy Kidder's arrangement of materials that one of the first students he portrays is Clarence. His story is haunting, quietly terrible, not unusual. His progress toward doom haunts the first half of the year's story and troubles Chris Zajac. Her initial expectations of Clarence are marked by foreboding; though determined to be hopeful, ten days later she is convinced even his tears are manipulative. His anger and mean acts have outweighed his intelligence and touching sweetness, and displaced or replaced his power to learn. Through no direct act of Zajac's, but with her compliance, the school psychologist decides to send Clarence away from the school to Alpha, the dreaded local institution with "special classes for troubled students." Now Robert, a fat boy with severely neurotic habits, becomes the worst kid. Zajac persists, and by June it seems she will have Robert's mother forced by court order to get him psychiatric help.

A further note about Clarence: in this class, required by law to reflect the racial balance of the neighborhood, he's the only black child, I think. Since Kidder doesn't assert this—I deduce it from careful rereading—I'm not sure. If he is, that's a bitter reminder of our schools' spectacular failures in teaching black students whose native powers are certainly the equal of others'. If he is, that creates a serious problem of trust (is he, isn't he?) for readers of this undocumented documentary. And if he is, how, in the USA, in 1989, can a responsible author fail or refuse to take it into account?

Not all Zajac's prophecies are fulfilled. Pedro, an asthmatic barely articulate in Spanish or English, tries earnestly but seems to her to be retarded; she refers him to the psychologist on the second day of school. It takes all year, but she is overjoyed to find that, in a test using pattern-recognition instead of language, he scores as near-genius. He too is sent off to a special school, one for the language-disabled.

Chris Zajac's identification of medical problems is one of the extra-curricular good deeds we must thank teachers for. It is not teaching, but it is a socially responsible act that desperately needs doing.

Recent discussions of American education begin with problems: the illiterate, the ill-parented, the drugged, the abused, the violent, the rowdy. This focus on what's bad readily accommodates the view of teachers' work that Zajac articulates, in her only statement of a principle of her pedagogy. She's advising a student-teacher. The first thing, she says, is to get "in control" of the students. Many educators would agree. A violent or even rowdy child is not understanding magnets or Abraham Lincoln.

But direct control by teachers of students (not infants or animals) is not the ideal use of control. Indeed, most of the problems I've named make interpersonal control impossible. And even in a good school like Holyoke, those who hate being controlled will respond—successfully—by controlling the teacher. (Chris Zajac sends home notes; evicts students to the hall, the psychologist, the principal's office; stays after school; spends hours off and on the job planning to heal the ill and outwit the nonconformist.)

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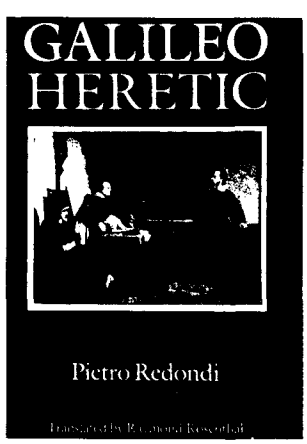
Galileo: Heretic

Pietro Redondi

Translated by Raymond Rosenthal



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Control can perhaps take a different form, one Kidder omits from *Among Schoolchildren*. It's a control proper to teaching: control of the work. Work is a legitimate connector. It orders the time and attention of teacher and learner, and gives them an appropriate place to meet. For both, it's liberating to do things right—things that can be counted on and added to. To identify such things is a teacher's job.

What makes a teacher a professional is a knowledge of the work so deep that she can envisage it as a whole, composed in the order of its essential parts. Doctors study the physical body, lawyers the body of the law, teachers the body of knowledge they teach. A teacher's expertise in a field—geography, long division, etc.—gives her the right and the power to control it through analysis into its elements which she then can teach. She'll spend the rest of her professional life revising and renewing her control of how to teach those elements, calling on their ordered strength and ordering fascination to attract, engage, and control students' attention—and even, to some extent, their behavior.

To embody the teachable elements of skills and data in work that can't be done wrong is no mean intellectual feat. It's hard, long, and fascinating. To undertake it is, I think, a teacher's fundamental professional task.

Its absence from *Among Schoolchildren* and from current talk about education suggests we owe teachers, as the base of their mandate, an honest job description. Shame and blame over school failure are unjust and useless. As feminists know, it's false merely to blame "the family" and "the school" for "problems." Kidder's suggestion that teachers alone in their classrooms bear a terrible burden is true—if we require that they control before they teach. He hints that the fault is in that most glorious American revolutionary ideal, universal education. Though the hint, even from a Harvard man, is unacceptable, the universal education that democracy requires does need plain speaking and clear definition.

Our ill-funded schools have, at least, intact walls, winter warmth, five hours a day, blackboards—and teachers like Chris Zajac who give astonishing, undaunted work and good will to their profession. What shall we ask of them? Do classes need police? psychiatrists? doctors? drug therapists? welfare specialists? Perhaps; if we think so, we must provide them as best we can. And surely we can hire clerical aides to collect lunch- and milk-money, doctors' and dentists' notes, permission slips.

Beyond these, we can ask that teachers be primarily engaged to teach—that is, to enable students to accumulate data and develop essential skills. Then there'd be not pathos in the picture of Chris Zajac struggling alone behind closed doors, but the image of working independence appropriate to teachers and learners, infinite riches in a little room. □

FROM HOMER, TO PICASSO, TO PIAF, TO GOD

REAL PRESENCES
George Steiner
University of Chicago Press, $19.95, 236 pp.

Robert P. Imbelli

George Steiner, professor of English and Comparative Literature at Geneva, Extraordinary Fellow at Cambridge, polymath author of such studies in language and culture as *In Bluebeard's Castle* and *Language and Silence*, prolific reviewer for *The New Yorker*, has written an impassioned essay, both luminous and dense, brilliant and bothersome, suffused with references to the masterworks of Western culture from Homer to Picasso (with even a passing tribute to Edith Piaf), but whose single, ineluctable concern is the reality of God. Understanding of, yet unapologetic to, the cultured despisers of religion, Steiner declares his almost scandalous intent from the first page of his text: "any coherent account of the capacity of human speech to communicate meaning and feeling is, in the final analysis, underwritten by the assumption of God's presence." No wonder he anticipates bemused incomprehension; for he writes out of the venerable tradition of the Word, the Logos, in an age which, he concedes, is that of the "afterword," the "epilogue."

In Steiner's view modern times represent a fundamental negation of the Logos-tradition of the West, a breaking of the covenant between word and world which had governed the aesthetic, intellectual, and religious sensibilities of Western culture since its origins in Israel and Greece. He maintains that this epochal repudiation fully dawned in Western consciousness toward the close of the nineteenth century and has culminated in our own day in the literary and philosophical movement known as "deconstruction." Like Hegel's celebrated owl, "it is at twilight, in the penumbra of epilogue, that this radical provocation has taken wing." For if the Logos tradition confesses: "In the beginning was the Word," deconstruction declares: "there was no beginning...only the play of sounds and markers amid the mutations of time." In deconstruction we meet no mere "negative theology": a critical purification leading to a chastened affirmation. In it is displayed pure nihilism: in which the analogical imagination cedes to an equivocal cleverness, a "do-it-yourself hermeneutics," suitably tailored to the age of computerized consumption.

In face of the radical challenge deconstruction poses, Steiner mounts an argument whose purpose is to affirm that the "real presences," which we encounter in the classics of literature, art, and music, anticipate and point to a Real Presence which subtends and sustains them. Much has been made in reviews of Steiner's book of his admission that, in these ultimate considerations, no "proof" is possible; that deconstruction's "real absence" is as feasible a proposal as the tradition's "real presence." However, I think to leave the question there (as these reviews tend to do) misses the heart of Steiner's essay. For it is not a matter of demonstration, but of

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discernment. What is at stake is an appreciation of the human, of its unique nature and responsibilities. What is at stake is the very character of the universe: whether it is hospitable to human endeavor; whether it affords the human a meaningful home. For Steiner, art's discernment and articulation of Logos encourages the wager of faith in the face of the threat of ultimate anomie. But it supports no irrational faith, no mindless leap.

In some respects Steiner's procedure is reminiscent of that advocated by the great American philosopher and logician, C.S. Peirce in his essay, "A Neglected Argument for the Reality of God." Peirce distinguishes between argument and argumentation, contending that argument may proceed cogently and coherently without employing argumentation's more restricted and less fertile logical analysis. Argument's distinctive mode of thought is, for Peirce, the playful meditation which he terms "musement."

Steiner's argument moves by such musement upon the great artistic creations of the Western tradition, not to impress by his erudition (which is astonishing), but to persuade by appeal to authoritative witnesses. And what these classics bespeak

> *All good art and literature begin in immanence. But they do not stop there. Which is to say, very plainly, that it is the enterprise and privilege of the aesthetic to quicken into lit presence the continuum between temporality and eternity, between matter and spirit, between man and "the other." It is in this common and exact sense that* poiesis *opens on to, is underwritten by, the religious and the metaphysical.*
>
> —George Steiner
> *Real Presences*

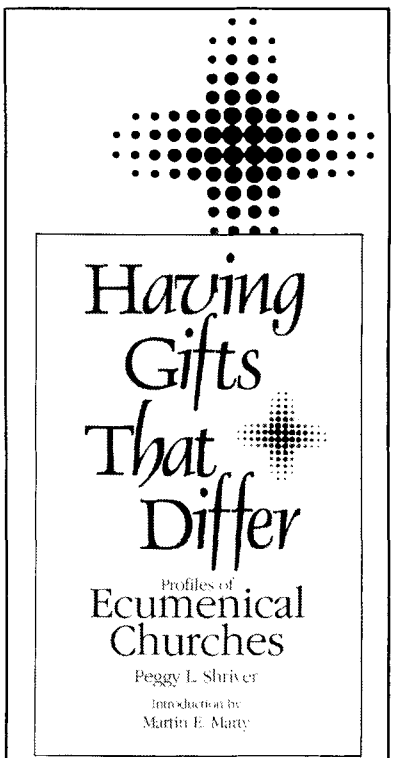
is the sacramentality of human existence, its spiritual seriousness and density. I would not hesitate to call Steiner's argument "mystagogic": he evokes the memory of the masterworks so that their embodied meanings might play forth intimations of transcendent mystery, of a source and destination beyond the range of the human.

Correlative to Steiner's insistence upon the objective givenness of the work of art and the fecund yet finite range of meaning it opens is his stress upon the subjective responsibility incumbent upon the one who encounters the classic expression. In one of the most sensitively compelling sections of the book, he limns an "ethics of reception," the stance of the receiving subject before the significant otherness of the work of art. The spiritual discipline of attention, respect, tact, and trust, which Steiner advocates, owes much to the sensitivities of Jewish thinkers like Martin Buber and Emmanuel Levinas; but it also calls to mind the monastic *lectio*, in its radically contemplative sense of what is due the stranger, the other—in this case, the artist—who is to be welcomed as a guest and as a bearer of blessing.

Steiner sums up the requisite attitude in the word "cortesia," that courtesy of heart which allows one to be touched by the other, to enter then into communication with the other, in the hope of realizing communion. Thereby, he repudiates modernity's postulate that the defining trait of the human is the will to power. Rather, with the Logos-tradition, Steiner holds that more basic to the human is the will to interpret, the unrestricted desire to understand, which itself subserves the will to enter into relationship, not dominatively, but for the sheer joy of being together. We are, Steiner insists, "monads haunted by communion."

The book concludes with an evocation of humankind's messianic hope. Between the Good Friday of common human experience and the Easter Sunday of explicit Christian faith stands the in-between time: "the long day's journey of the Saturday," quickened by the poem, the painting, the song. They serve as the promise of an integral word and the foretaste of a completed communion. "Without them how could we be patient?"

In this remarkable essay, the single note I find discordant is Steiner's view that artistic creation is "counter-creation": agonistic and rival to the primordial creation. In this hypothesis the artist enters the lists as maker confronting Maker, striving to bring forth a personal cosmos



PEGGY L. SHRIVER
Introduction by
MARTIN E. MARTY
$7.95

Among the thirty-two Christian communions—largely Protestant and Orthodox—profiled in this book there are great diversities. Yet each has been committed to working together in an ecumenical relationship emphasizing unity of purpose and destiny. Here are described the unique riches of each Christian tradition, the poignant stories of their historical roots, the common human strengths and weaknesses, the evidence of the Holy Spirit as balm and goad, and the centrality of Jesus Christ in all of the churches.

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out of chaos in what verges upon a self-recreation. This almost Promethean insertion seems to me to fit poorly with Steiner's own argument, compromising its consistency.

For should not the artist be the prime practitioner of the ethics of reception? And is not an ethics of reception, at its heart, a eucharistic ethics: receiving all, thankfully, as grace? Hence, in counterpoint to those strains of the tradition, cited by Steiner, which celebrate the artist as *alter deus*, another god, I would invoke the more orthodox practice of Bach and Haydn. When, at the end of his musical composition, Bach inscribed "*Soli Deo Gloria*" and Haydn "*Laus Deo*," they seem not to have been concluding a cosmic competition or metaphysical rivalry. And they were certainly not being self-referential! The undeniably real presences of their musical offerings were grateful acknowledgments of the Real Presence who originates and sustains all things. □

IT HAPPENED BEFORE THE FALL

WOMEN AND EVIL
Nel Noddings
University of California, $10, 284 pp.

Margaret R. Miles

In this engaging book, Nel Noddings examines several theological, philosophical, and psychological associations of women with evil in order to propose a counter-definition of evil from the perspective of women's experience.

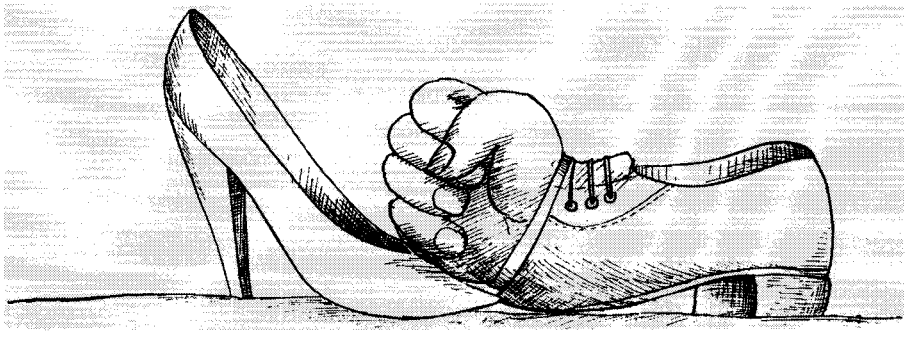
Arguing that traditional views of evil—as defilement, disobedience, or transgression against a god—"are not only male but masculine in the sense that they maintain and even glorify traits that have been genderized in favor of males," Noddings proposes that a different analysis results from seeing evil "through the eyes of people who bear and raise children, try to maintain a comfortable and stable home, feed and nurture the hungry and developing." From this perspective, the content of evil is nonproductive physical pain as well as the psychic pains of separation and helplessness.

Although Noddings finds the masculine views of evil that she explores consistently wrongheaded or shortsighted, she does not assume or conclude that "feminine" is good and "masculine" bad. Nor does she wish to claim that women can save the world. She does think that some of the skills women have developed in their traditional caring roles—"one must persuade, plead, appeal to sympathies, interpret, reword, and...attribute the best possible motive consonant with reality to both parties in the dispute"—can make an important contribution to the alleviation of evils.

The greatest strength of the book, however, does not lie in Noddings's description of Western male writers' views of evil or even in her redefinition of evil from women's perspective, but in her concrete suggestions for education toward a morality of evil in which the goal is the reduction of pain, separation, and helplessness. Such an education, she says, cannot rely on traditional ethical principles designed for individuals, but must instill a relational ethic in which "the response of another is one important criterion by which we judge the morality of our acts." Moreover, methods of moral reasoning cannot in themselves lead to the kind of relational sensitivity that women have learned in caring for the daily intimate needs of others. Rather, the "real work" of caring for others must be incorporated into an education in which one simultaneously "works and thinks and theorizes." Noddings argues that such an education for morality must be a high priority in a contemporary world riddled with war, terrorism, torture, and psychological abuse.

Noddings's compassionate vision of the systematic reduction of evil through education, a continuation of a project begun in an earlier book, *Caring: A Feminine Approach to Ethics and Moral Education*, clearly finds organized religion part of the problem rather than part of the solution. The weakest sections of the book deal with historical situations, events, and ideas handled, not in terms of their social, intellectual, or religious context, but from a presentist perspective. The general point made in these sections, however, seems legitimate, namely that Christianity has contributed to the mystification of evil by circulating myths of evil that have produced unjust social arrangements, the construction of others as enemies, and cosmic validation of cruelty. Women have participated in male-designed and -administered religion not because they are gullible, hypocritical, or stupid, she says, but because of Christianity's emphasis on helping others: "We might argue that religious institutions merely gave a verbal blessing to that which women would have done anyway."

Noddings privileges feelings of empathy, caring, and the desire to help others as the basis for moral reasoning and action. Acknowledging that women seem to have these feelings more than men do because they have largely been confined to social roles in which they cared for others, Noddings would like to alleviate



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What is wrong with the vast majority of us? The answer I have been suggesting all along is that we do not understand or accept our own disposition toward evil and that we lack a morality of evil. It is normal (in both the "ordinary" and "healthy" senses of the word) to incline toward evil; it is pathological to ignore or deny this inclination. By analogy, all of us are susceptible to the streptococcus, but some of us are allergic to it and get dreadful sicknesses... instead of the usual sore throat or earache. Similarly, there is a continuum of susceptibility to the evil within, but no one is immune. Evil is neither entirely out-there nor entirely in-here; it is an interactive phenomenon that requires acceptance, understanding, and steady control rather than great attempts to overcome it once and for all.

—Nel Noddings
Women and Evil

women's burden by extending it to all people. If relational virtues and relational tasks—teaching, parenting, advising, mediating, helping—were distributed among men and women and not considered as feminine, the reduction of pain, separation, and helplessness would also be more likely to occur.

Women and Evil does not explore the limitations or dangers of behavior based on empathy with another person's psychological or physical pain, separation, or helplessness. I hope it is not trivializing Noddings's frequently eloquent plea for empathy to suggest that the capacity for damage to the other, rather than reduction of evil, should receive some attention. The "tough love" counseled for families of alcoholics addresses one kind of destructive empathy, but may be extended to a variety of "caring" relationships in which one person takes an inappropriate responsiblity for another. Even caring, it seems, must be critically examined rather than simply recommended and taught. Nevertheless, the book is a valuable contribution to the analysis of evil and its alleviation. □

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EVANGELICALS WITHOUT HYPE

MINE EYES HAVE SEEN THE GLORY
A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America
Randall Balmer
Oxford University Press, $19.95, 246 pp.

Michael O.Garvey

One summer morning years ago in San Francisco, awakened by the doorbell of the house in which I was staying, I encountered an abrupt, stout, black woman who clutched a Bible and a fistful of pamphlets in one hand and a briefcase in the other. She wanted to know whether, if I died at that very instant, I would go to heaven. Having stayed up far too late the night before with friends and pizza and beer and tequila, at that very instant I was confident that I would die, but that was about it. I gave the only reply available to a sinful son of the Catholic church: "I hope so." A few minutes later our meeting ended in a burst of faulty catechesis, and I'd forgotten all about it until a few days ago.

Not all, but most of the encounters in Randall Balmer's American travelogue reminded me of that morning. Most of the evangelicals he meets and writes about are spiritual cousins of John Wesley, who reported that on May 24, 1738 during a meeting in Aldersgate Street, London at a quarter to nine, "I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death." Like Wesley, these men and women claim to have had individual, isolable, and overwhelming experiences of God, datable meetings with Jesus which have transformed their lives. Like the woman I met at the front door that morning, they are also dauntingly precise in their assessments of the universe, its meaning, the designs of its Creator, and their place in the whole arrangement.

For all that, they are a remarkably diverse crowd, and Balmer admits at the outset that several of the people about whom he writes "would be embarrassed, even outraged, to appear in the same book as some of the others treated here." The very term "evangelical" is used by Balmer (a religious historian who was raised as an evangelical) in a provocatively broad sense. It refers to "conservative Protestants—including fundamentalists, evangelicals, pentecostals, and charismatics—who insist on some sort of spiritual rebirth as a criterion for entering the kingdom of heaven, who often impose exacting behavioral standards on the faithful, and whose beliefs, institutions, and folkways comprise the evangelical subculture in America." Standing in judgment of contemporary culture and believing that, any minute now, Christ will return to claim his own before the seven-year tribulation and the thousand years of theocratic rule on earth, most of these folks would be inclined to agree with what Dwight L. Moody, founder of the Moody Bible Institute, said more than a century ago: "I don't find any place where God says the world is going to grow better and better. I find that the earth is to grow worse and worse, and that at length there is going to be a separation."

This is unfamiliar terrain for those of us who rely (as I do) largely on television, newsweeklies, supermarket tabloids, and the *New York Times* for our information on evangelical doings. Giving televangelists like Oral Roberts, Mr. and Mrs. Bakker, and Jimmy Swaggart little more than an allusion or two, Balmer implies that there is less to their conspicuous "ministries" than meets the eye, and even when he goes to Iowa and New Hampshire during Pat

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Robertson's and Jack Kemp's Republican primary campaigns, it is not to interview the celebrities but their evangelical campaign workers. With few exceptions, the men and women Balmer presents are sincere, thoughtful, and congenial people of deep and abiding belief.

There are exotics here, of course. At the Capstone Cathedral in Phoenix, a building designed after the pyramid on the back of a one dollar bill, we meet a faith healer named Neal Frisby, who claims to be the "Rainbow Prophet" described by John in the tenth chapter of the Book of Revelation, the "mighty angel with a rainbow wrapped round his head." At the annual convention of the Christian Booksellers Association, author Robert Faid, plugging his new book, *Gorbachev! Has the Real Antichrist Come?*, assigns numbers to each Cyrillic letter in Mikhail Gorbachev's name, analyzes the birthmark on his balding head ("I see a red dragon and over the right eye, there's a tail that hangs, representing stars."), and computes the odds against the Soviet president's being the Antichrist at exactly 710,609,175,188,282,100 to 1.

But these people seem to be the Mother Angelicas and Matthew Foxes of the evangelical subculture, highly noticeable products but inadequate representatives of a substantial, lively, and self-critical tradition. There is far more going on here than the high-stepping, sweaty antics of Jerry Lee Lewis's cousin, Jimmy Swaggart, where most media inquiries falter. Douglas Frank, an evangelical historian who informally presides over a community of scholars at the Oregon Extension of Trinity College, laments the subculture's exclusionary "temptation to moralize," and argues that it equally afflicts the boorish Jerry Falwells and the impeccably feminist, pacifist, communitarian, wholistic Sojourners-community sorts. Frank's preaching surrounds a one-sentence summary of the Gospel: "We're all bastards, but God loves us anyway."

Balmer also introduces a quietly courageous, black, evangelical minister, John Perkins, whose interracial ministry and passion for reconciliation in his native Mississippi has stubbornly survived police violence, corporate oppression, and the onslaught of "prosperity theology—the God-will-make-you-rich-and-happy notions propagated by...televangelists." One suspects that Perkins speaks for many evangelicals when he says, "This prosperity stuff is deadly." Nor is it possible for even the most jaded reader to snicker at the witness of a Native American evangelical, Father Innocent Good House, pastor of the Sioux community of St. Luke's, amidst the squalor and despair of a North Dakota reservation.

Balmer, a fine writer, is also a bashful one. A lucid and compelling guide through the doctrinal thickets, he fits a whole semester's worth of evangelical theology into six magisterial pages of a chapter on the Dallas Theological Seminary. In roughly a dozen paragraphs, he summarizes a

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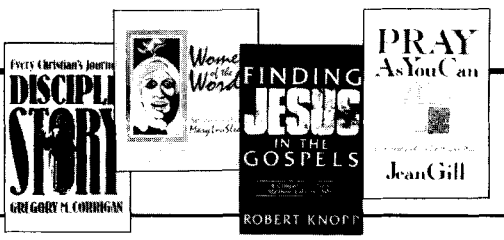

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popular evangelical movie entitled *A Thief in the Night*, a thriller about the last days. He is a keen and sympathetic observer of evangelical phenomena, but aside from his general uneasiness about the truculent face that the evangelical subculture presents to the world, he is reluctant to comment on the belief that we are poised at the end of human history and what that might mean. "Generations of children in fundamentalist households were instructed to eschew 'worldliness,'" he writes with apparent disapproval, "and to adhere to strict codes of morality that forbade card-playing, gambling, cosmetics, motion pictures, dancing, alcohol, and tobacco. Some of the proscriptions have eased somewhat in evangelical circles, but the suspicion of worldliness, of theological and cultural innovation, endures." There are worse things, aren't there, than such suspicion?

Sectarianism gets kicked around a lot these days, usually by commentators who are unaware of their own membership in another, more powerful, more secular sect. Believers who stand apart from the world can't all be dismissed as anal retentive curmudgeons, and many of them, in the writings of the ancient church, for instance, have expressed their alarm profoundly. Precisely where many of us "nonevangelical" believers might find a kinship with the people in these pages is in their mistrust of contemporary culture. Speaking as one television-watching, beer-drinking Roman Catholic, whose mother taught him how to shoot craps when he was seven and whose five-year-old daughter recently received a garish Little Miss Makeup Kit for her birthday, I think that the people of the evangelical subculture might be onto something. At least we ought to recognize that most criticism of them fatuously appropriates the secular culture's incapacity to see religious belief as anything other than an engine of social behavior. These people might appear to us as grotesque refugees from some Flannery O'Connor short story, but their refusal to join in the delirious chorus in our ongoing don't-worry-be-happy daydream is honorable and brave. The world is passing away, after all, and the assumption that it isn't needs a bit more challenge than it's been getting lately.

Leaving aside some admittedly major doctrinal differences with these sectarians (the Lord's presence in the Eucharist and my need to read the Bible with the church looking over my shoulder come to mind) and also some significant disagreements about recreational pursuits, household administration, and appropriate topics of conversation, I can't manage to believe that it is really such an unhealthy thing to mistrust the world and to nurture in our children a revulsion for the collective pride, the zest for power, and the predilection for illusion that have in our own century slaughtered and stifled whole generations of bodies and souls. □

THE CINDERS OF LEBANON

LEBANON
Death of a Nation
Sandra Mackey
Congdon & Weed, $22.95, 295 pp.

Dale Bishop

I did not want to like this book. The title's qualifying phrase, "Death of a Nation," seemed abrupt and heartless. But recent events—the systematic destruction of both the Christian and the Muslim sectors of Beirut by Syria and its Lebanese militia allies and by forces loyal to General Michel Aoun; the departure of hundreds of thousands of Lebanese from their homeland, many of whom will not return; the repeated failures of would-be mediators to bring about a settlement of the "Lebanese problem"—suggest that Ms.Mackey got it right. Lebanon, or at least the Lebanon of its people's fondest hopes, seems to be dead.

Although the book went to press before the latest round of violence, which began in March of 1989, the author has done an admirable job of tracing the origins of the conflict that has kept Lebanon in a state of civil war since 1975. The continuing debate among observers, a debate not unrelated to sympathies with regard to the Palestinian issue, is whether the primary responsibility for the tragedy of Lebanon lies with the Lebanese system, indeed with the very artificiality of the Lebanese state from its inception, or with the intervention of the outside actors, notably the Palestinians, the Israelis, and the Syrians. Many Lebanese, both Christian and Muslim, would affirm the latter, though the particular culprit may vary according to the political inclinations of the informant. "If only the Lebanese could be left alone to solve their own problems..." is a frequent refrain.

Mackey is unwilling to let the Lebanese off the hook even though her critique of the role of regional and international powers in Lebanon is scathing. "The inescapable truth is that the war germinated in the soil of the Lebanese own discord and then expanded as the Palestinian factor was added and finally peaked with the involvement of Syria, Israel, and others." This is a real virtue of the book. The author is not satisfied with simple explanations; rather, she painstakingly conducts the reader through the labyrinth of Lebanese politics, exposing the grievances and the phobias of the various groups who have participated in the Lebanese war. In the process, she also points out how the regional powers have shamelessly exploited those grievances and phobias to their own advantage, thus making Lebanon the arena in which everyone's interests are advanced, save those of the Lebanese.

Nor is U.S. policy toward Lebanon, a policy characterized both by "innocence abroad" and a deep-rooted cynicism toward the Middle East in general and Arabs in particular, exempt from criticism. Mackey correctly calls to task the ineptitude of the Reagan administration, which gave the "green light" to Israel's 1982 invasion; concluded a disastrous agreement between Lebanon, Israel, and the U.S. that led to the downfall of the Gemayel government; and in frustration shelled Lebanese villages,

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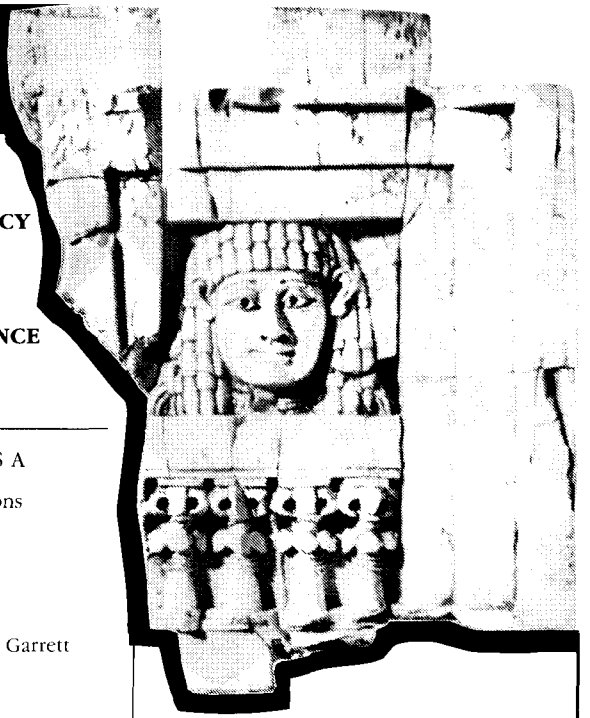

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thus bringing the U.S. and U.S. hostages into the deadly Lebanese game of violence and retaliation.

The book is not without its faults. The writing at times is a bit fervid, and sometimes it is not all that clear. There is a tendency toward reductionism in discussions of "the Arabs" and "the West." And there are occasional editing errors—"Hojatolislan," as a reference to the National Pact of 1948—thus giving the impression that this manuscript was hurried to press, perhaps in response to Lebanon's latest prominence in the news. The specialist might find items to quibble with, but for those who seek an understanding of Lebanon behind the headlines and the two-minute news summaries this will be a very helpful book. □

MINISTRY IN MIDSTREAM

TRANSFORMING PARISH MINISTRY
Jay P. Dolan, R. Scott Appleby, Patricia Byrne, Debra Campbell
Crossroad, $27.50, 366 pp.

Patricia Gries

In three marvelous and carefully researched essays by R. Scott Appleby, Patricia Byrne, C.S.J., and Debra Campbell and a wrap-up chapter by Jay P. Dolan, *Transforming Parish Ministry* presents a historical perspective on fifty years of American Roman Catholic ministry and life, from 1930-80. Each essay examines two major issues: the change which took place in the understanding and ministerial practice of priests, sisters, and laity, and how this change altered the relationship of each to the parish.

Upon first reflection one is inclined to say, "the more things change, the more they stay the same." But *Transforming Parish Ministry* helps the reader to see the subtle and not so subtle changes of church ministry in the context of cultural, social, and church developments in the United States.

R. Scott Appleby's essay on the American Catholic priesthood relies on church documents, historical studies, and personal interviews with seventy-five priests who minister in a variety of settings all across the U.S. He writes of Mundelein and Hillenbrand, John Courtney Murray, and contemporaries like John Egan and John Tracy Ellis, men who made significant pastoral contributions which helped shape and form the American Catholic church over the last fifty years. Appleby presents the cultural, political, socioeconomic, and ecclesial milieu in which they exercised their ministry and describes their response to the demands and needs of their diocese, parish, and world.

Appleby traces the changing identity and roles of priests by describing them as ombudsmen, pioneers, and orchestra leaders. The ombudsman-priest "took it upon himself to act" but did not empower the laity of the parish. The pioneer-priest initiated reform movements in the areas of social justice and liturgy; he took his ministry beyond the parish. Lastly, the orchestra-leader priest is a contemporary example of a priest who "brings cohesion and direction" to the many ministries and activities of parish life.

Patricia Byrne writes on changes in the ministry of religious sisters in the U.S. during the same period. She draws on material primarily from the experience and archives of six congregations which represent a broad geographical distribution and sustained involvement in parish life. The most significant transformation for sisters over the past fifty years was the movement away from cloistered life and parish schools to a diversified ministry which extends well beyond parochial boundaries and territorial areas of involvement. Sisters were no longer primarily staffing schools and hospitals, but were responding to the needs of the poor and disenfranchised in a variety of capacities in urban, suburban, and rural settings.

Factors which greatly influenced this change were a gradual process of professionalism in teaching; the dramatic cultural and ecclesiastical transformation of the 1960s; a theological revolution that interpreted the world in a highly positive sense; and heightened awareness of historical and social patterns related to the role of women. Women religious began connecting with one another, forming national bodies to address issues in religious life as well as issues and concerns in ministry. One such group, the Sister Formation Conference with Sister Mary Emil, was instrumental in encouraging and supporting technical endeavors for sisters.

REVIEWERS

RAYMOND A. SCHROTH, S.J., *author of* Books for Believers *(Paulist), is a professor in the communications department at Loyola University in New Orleans.*

MARIE PONSOT *is a member of the English department at Queens College. With Rosemary Deen, she is co-author of* Beat Not the Poor Desk: Writing, What to Teach, How to Teach It, and Why *(Boynton/Cook). Her most recent volume of poetry is* The Green Dark *(Knopf).*

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MARGARET R. MILES *is Bussey Professor of Historical Theology at the Harvard University Divinity School. Her most recent publication is* Carnal Knowing: Female Nakedness and Religious Meaning in the Christian West *(Beacon).*

MICHAEL O. GARVEY *works in the public relations department at the University of Notre Dame and is a columnist for the* National Catholic Reporter.

DALE BISHOP *is Middle East Secretary for the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He was an Ecumenical Fellow with the Middle East Council of Churches in 1983-84, and has traveled frequently to Lebanon.*

PATRICIA GRIES *is the director of the Center for Ministry and the Division of Ministry Personnel for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.*

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Sisters have made significant contributions to the life of American Catholicism, but have been unrecognized by the church at large. Byrne's essay brings this reality into focus by presenting the historical facts with clarity.

The laity also found their identity and roles changing and expanding. No longer satisfied to be Catholics who "pray, pay, and obey," Debra Campbell recounts how lay Catholics in the U.S. developed new ways of expressing their Catholicism. As

> *As Americans and as Catholics, we will never understand who we are unless we know who we were. In studying the past we can also better understand the present and appreciate the work of our predecessors who blazed the trails that led us to this present age.*
> *Transforming Parish Ministry*

they became more American, they challenged church structures and authority. Like religious sisters, they began to connect with one another in new ways. While membership continued in such groups as altar and rosary societies, the Knights of Columbus, and other organizations, new associations of lay men and women developed for those serving as career or volunteer lay ministers.

The laity have long been involved in parish life and religious movements beyond it, such as the Christian Family Movement, Marriage Encounter, and Catholic Worker houses. But until recently such involvement was not generally recognized as ministry or understood to be a responsibility of all the baptized to the Gospel. The lay apostolate of the 1940s and 1950s gave way to lay ministry of the 1970s and 1980s. Lay men and women responded to ongoing spiritual renewal as well as to the needs of the sick, alienated, and poor by participating in RENEW groups, liturgical ministries, staffing soup kitchens, and providing pastoral care. This transformation is well documented by Campbell.

Jay Dolan's wrap-up summarizes, in historical context, the major shifts and changes experienced by American Catholics over the past fifty years. He writes clearly about the national parishes of the 1930s and 1940s, how they eventually gave way as Americans moved to the suburbs, and how Catholics became more integrated into the American mainstream and middle class. He takes up the complicated subjects of individualism and pluralism in American society and the integration of Vatican II theology into Catholic life. He clarifies for the reader the reality of being Catholic and American today. In sum, this is an informative and readable book on Roman Catholicism in the United States, both its progress and its struggles, as lived and shaped by the People of God □

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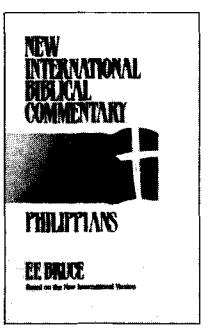

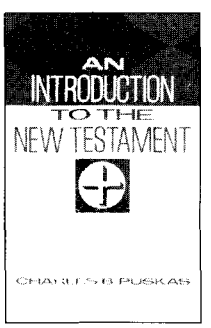

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IN BRIEF

THE MARGINAL CATHOLIC: CHALLENGE, DON'T CRUSH, by Joseph M. Champlin, Ave Maria Press, $6.95, 155 pp.

The ancient churches had their rigorists: well-intentioned believers who left many an indelible mark upon the face of Christian commitment, showing how principled and how picayune it could be. Ironically, many rigorists were condemned as heretics for deemphasizing such essential virtues as mercy, forgiveness, and hospitality.

Rigorists today influence the church's institutional policies and, as Champlin points out, its pastoral practices: sacramental preparation (including marriage, baptism, and confirmation), penance, and annulments. Pastors and parish leaders who rigidly apply canon law and liturgical directives can harm the vulnerable faith of some Catholics and cause the church to appear cruel and heartless to those outside it.

Champlin argues, gently and convincingly, against pastoral rigidity, keeping before the reader that it was sinners for whom Christ died; it is sinners who are the church. Champlin's specific concern is for "marginal Catholics," those who "have only a tenuous link with the parish," a "fragile bond," manifest, perhaps, by their rejecting a major church tenet, not participating in weekly Mass, not receiving Eucharist or penance—not actively participating in parish life. His advice: "caution"; "gentle patience"; "awesome respect"; "an extremely personal and highly individualized approach" to pastoring. He bases his advice on the Code of Canon Law, designed to be flexible; on Scripture, which cannot be used to substantiate an exclusionary position despite specific verses demanding strong commitment; and on the signs of the times—citing statistics on family disintegration and change, alcohol and drug abuse, and other factors affecting faith development.

One way to avoid crushing the bruised reed, Champlin says, is to realize that all requests of the church—for baptism, marriage, annulment, and so on—are moments for evangelization. Without sacrificing ecclesial principles or commitment to discipleship, Champlin envisions an inclusive church: "a warm welcome reassures callers that they have...rediscovered their true spiritual...home and have finally returned to the house of God where they belong."

Each chapter—after the first and unfortunately the weakest—begins with a story: parishioners tell how they were driven away from or brought back to an active Catholicism. Several chapters are devoted to baptism and marriage. Champlin has written a pastoral handbook for pastors, liturgists, deacons, teachers and directors of religious education, catechists and sponsors of the RCIA, parish council members—any Catholic in a local parish who ministers to other Catholics. While a few of the author's theological and liturgical points are arguable, the book deserves to be read because of its subject and tone, and the soundness of its main point. K.S.S.

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 578)

but it is based on the historical fact that Auschwitz was designed to exterminate the Polish nation as well.

Pawlikowski calls the convent "a shame to Catholics." For this Catholic, the shame is not that my faith wants to memorialize its victims where they, too, died. The shame is in the Catholic leadership, intellectual and clerical, that is beating a hasty retreat over the bodies of the victims who were their fellow Christians.

FELIKS S. BRUKS
Polish Association of Former Political Prisoners of Nazi and Soviet Concentration Camps

The author replies:

It is obvious that Dr. Grondelski read my article more with emotion than with care. For I certainly did not say, as he charges, that Jews alone have the right to determine what is appropriate memorialization of victims at the Auschwitz campsite. I clearly fault Jews for contributing to the crisis by failing to recognize that special role the campsite plays in Polish history as the primary center of the extermination of Polish leaders in the Nazi effort to reduce Poland to a "servant" state. And this applies to Mr. Bruks's objections as well.

My criticism of Cardinal Glemp was based not on the belief that Jews have exclusive rights to Auschwitz, as Grondelski falsely claims, but that the Polish church failed to recognize Jewish rights at all. There should have been Polish-Jewish consultation from the outset, not the unilateral act of opening the convent by the Catholic side.

With respect to the convent at Dachau, we must recognize that the situation there is not a meaningful parallel to Auschwitz. First of all, if my understanding is correct, the convent is technically outside the camp grounds. More importantly, Dachau was one of the few Nazi camps in which Jews were a minority. This is in stark contrast to Auschwitz, the premier Jewish camp, whose very name has come to symbolize the Final Solution itself.

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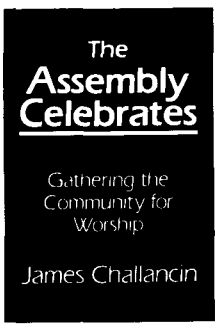

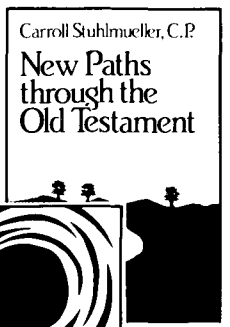

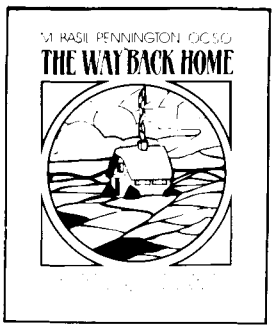

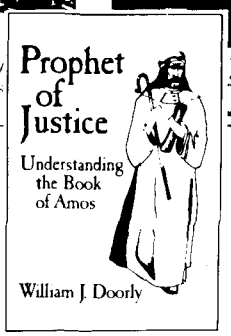

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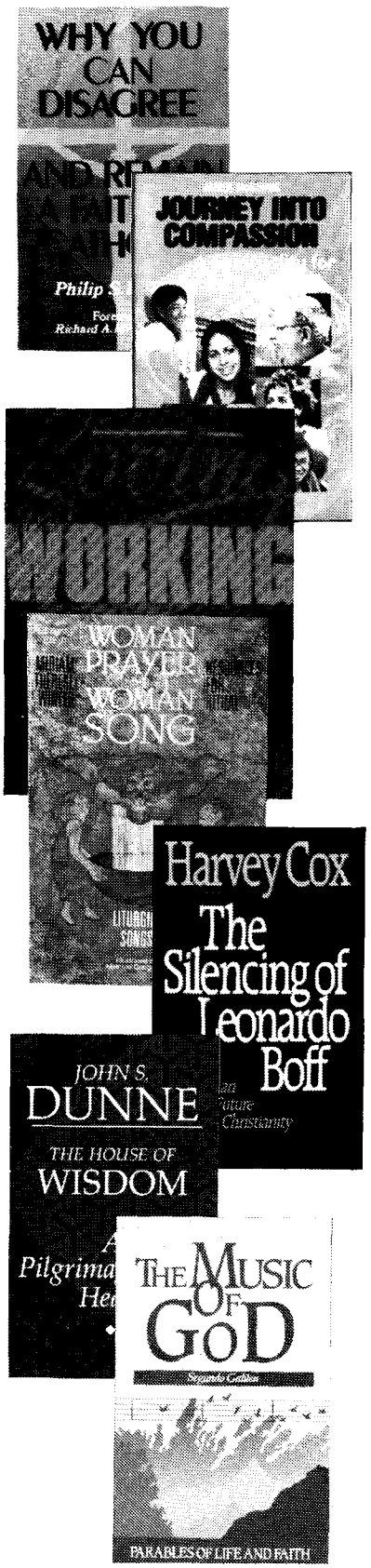

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